A Campaign Courtship

Penniman

FT MEADE
GenColl

Class PZ3

Book P383

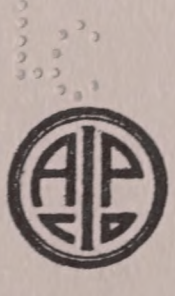
PRESENTED BY C

Copy 2

A Campaign Courtship

By

PAUL PENNIMAN.



Westerville, Ohio
The American Issue Publishing Company,
Publishers

Copy 2

PZ 3
.P383
C
Copy 2

Copyrighted 1914,
By The American Issue Publishing Company,
Westerville, Ohio

Brief
Amer. Anti-Saloon
League
S. 10-19

CONTENTS.

Chapter		Page
I.	Practical Politics	9
II.	Almost a Proposal	21
III.	Council of War	35
IV.	The Unexpected	50
V.	The Strong Hand	63
VI.	Mike's Mistake	68
VII.	Playing It Safe	72
VIII.	The Trap Sprung	84
IX.	The Foundations Removed	92
X.	Clifford's Finish	105

A Campaign Courtship

CHAPTER ONE

Practical Politics.

IT WAS a hot campaign. The 14th district had always been regarded as perfectly safe by the leaders of the dominant party, but this year there were storm signals flying. Local option was agitating the whole state, while the location of the proposed new million dollar hospital for the insane was a disturbing local issue. Prince county had offered to donate a site for the building, but the Committee on State Charities, of which Senator Grafton himself was chairman, was known to be entertaining a proposal to buy a site on the other side of the state, paying one hundred thousand dollars for five hundred acres of land which any man could have bought in the open market the year before for fifty thousand. Senator Grafton's willingness thus to defeat the interests of his own constituents and to squander the state's money by paying a preposterous price for land which was not needed gave rise to ugly and persistent rumors that he had "golden" reasons for his course.

Those, however, who understood practical

politics and knew how the game was played put the blame higher up. For, in spite of Grafton's pompous manner, and his favorite campaign phrase that he was "answerable only to his God and his constituents," it was well known to the observing that he was always careful to have his views coincide with those of the local political leader, Mr. Clifford James, or "Boss Cliff," as he was known to his lieutenants.

The political "organization" in Prince county, to which Grafton owed allegiance, was the dominating factor in the 14th senatorial district by reason of the strong hand, clear brain and administrative genius of its sole and undisputed leader. Clear cut as a cameo, cold and exact as the multiplication table, single-eyed and direct as a locomotive, Clifford James had built up an organization or "machine," as his enemies called it, which had often been pronounced unbeatable. His never failing ability to "deliver" delegations and the sagacity of his advice in party councils had given him a wide influence in both state and national politics, and had secured an amount of "patronage" which had still further entrenched him as the local autocrat.

It was not often that any member of the organization risked a "call down" from "Boss Cliff" by deviating in any respect from his or-

ders. But Senator Grafton was verging on revolt as he strode into the luxurious offices of Clifford James, Attorney at Law.

"Good morning, Cliff," said the portly senator, helping himself to a chair and handling his gloves uneasily.

"Well, what's the matter now?" The boss always went straight to the point.

"Look a' here, Cliff," Grafton broke out impetuously, "I can't stand for this asylum deal. It's rotten and everybody knows it. I get a hat full of letters in every mail saying that Haskins will unseat me unless I give an absolute pledge to vote for the Prince county site. He roasted me to a finish last night in his speech in the armory and tipped off the broadest kind of a hint that I am to get a rake-off on the deal. It is against the interests of this district, and I owe something to my constituents," concluded the senator grandly.

"That'll do for the rough necks at a rally, but don't hand any of it to me," said Clifford coolly. "Don't forget for a minute that it was the organization that made you senator."

"I know that you gave me the nomination," replied Grafton with just a shade of defiance in his voice, "but the people elected me and the public is aroused on this issue."

"I say with your Uncle Van, 'the public be damned,' " said Clifford contemptuously.

"Yes, but Haskins is making a great run for my seat and I'm afraid he'll beat me to it."

"The opposition in our own party is not organized and we are. A pound of steam in a machine will do more work than a hundred pounds blowing off in the air. We will return you with plenty to spare even if the majority is a little reduced." The boss spoke in the easy tone of one who is sure of himself and his position.

"That's just the point," said Grafton angrily. "If I do happen to win out it'll be by a nose with my fine majority of the last election all shot to pieces. You want me to do the dirty work right in the lime light while you stand in the background and grab off the profits."

"Don't be a fool, Bill. The Liquor Dealers' Association and the Land Company are going down to the capitol each bringing such a barrel of coin that they will have to pay excess baggage. You just be good, and vote right, and I will take care of you when we carve the melons."

"But what am I to say," asked the Honorable Bill, somewhat mollified, "when they interrupt my speeches, as they are doing lately, and ask what site I am going to vote for?"

"Feed 'em a little guff," said the wily campaigner. "Tell them that the whole matter

rests with the committee, and that you cannot forestall the action of the committee, but that so far as you personally are concerned, the interests of the state and of the good people of the 14th district will always be cherished by you as a sacred trust. Then branch off onto the Mexican war or the Boston tea party. Make the eagle scream, and you will have them throwing up their hats and forgetting all about the insane asylum. But let me give you a straight tip right here. Local option is the real issue in this campaign. When Jennings, the reverend meddler in politics, gets after you you won't find it so easy to make him eat out of your left hand."

"Pouf! I'm too old a campaigner to worry over Sunday school politics."

"This is no Aunt Nancy movement." James was in earnest. "As long as they confined themselves to pulpiteering and petitions and cottage prayer meetings we classed them with mosquitoes and bed bugs and other harmless pests. But this young cleric knows how to play the game. He is getting votes."

"O, I'll soon have him in cold storage," said Grafton, cunning and confident. "I'll tell him that he would be the most popular preacher in town if he would confine himself to preaching the Gospel, and I'll give him a check for fifty dollars for the heathen."

"Don't try any childish tricks on Jennings. Be careful how you handle him for he is a live wire. Treat him with courtesy, put him off with glittering generalities if you can, promise anything verbally when there are no witnesses around, but don't give out any signed statements which will cause the Amberfoam Brewing Company to shut off supplies. Remember that underneath his ecclesiastical coat there is a real man, and manhood, if it be the real thing, is always a force to be reckoned with. If the campaign should narrow down to a personal encounter between you and Jennings I am too good a gambler to bet against the minister."

"You're not very complimentary this morning, Clifford. But I'll show this pious churchman that running a political campaign is a very different proposition from managing a ladies' aid society."

When Grafton's office boy announced, "Rev. Jennings," the next morning the old fox leaned back in his swivel chair and prepared to pull the wool over the eyes of the unworldly lamb. But somehow he lost his cocksureness the moment the virile young minister strode into the room. There was something about that direct, fearless glance that caused all thoughts of trickery and deceit to slink out of sight as coyotes and hyenas skulk away

at the approach of the lion.

"Good morning, Senator." The minister's tone indicated that he had come on business.

"Good morning, my dear Doctor," said Grafton profusely, rising and shaking hands vigorously, "I am delighted to see you. Have a chair.

"Thank you. I come representing the Prince County Anti-Saloon League to ask if we may depend on you to support the proposed local option bill in the event of your election to the senate?" The minister's tone was as direct as his glance.

"Why, my dear Doctor, you may be sure that on this, as on all great moral issues, the good people of the 14th district may depend on me to do the right thing every time." The senator was all sugar and oil.

"I am very happy to hear you say so. Kindly give me that statement in writing as we would like to use it in this evening's 'Courier.'"

The bland smile gave way to a look of crafty caution.

"I never give out signed pledges before an election. If elected I will enter upon my duties unhampered by promises and free to follow my judgment and my conscience."

"On the contrary, Senator, when you state, as you did in your speech Tuesday night, that you stand squarely on the party platform you

are giving a promise to support every article in it. Every candidate should conduct his campaign unhampered by promises to individuals or corporations, but with definite assurance to his constituents as to his position on every great public issue. That is what you are doing on other questions and we would like to have you define your position on the local option bill."

"Dr. Jennings, I am a great admirer of the late President McKinley. Mr. McKinley did not presume to lead public opinion; he followed it. He kept his finger on the public pulse and when he found what the public wanted he stood for that. If I am reelected to my seat in the senate I shall not go to the capitol to represent myself, but the people of the 14th district. And on this local option question, as upon every other, when it arises, I shall endeavor to ascertain what the people of this district want and to represent their wishes."

"It is very true that Major McKinley followed, rather than led, public opinion. But he always ascertained, to the best of his ability, what that opinion was, and announced himself accordingly, before he asked any man to vote for him. If you wish the votes of this district on the ground that you represent its consensus of opinion you should announce in advance what you believe that opinion to be."

"I stand on my record," said the senator, a bit stiffly. "I have always stood for decency and good order and am not a drinking man myself. The people of this district can trust me to do the right thing in this matter without any needless pledges."

"It is your record which is not satisfactory to the temperance forces, Senator Grafton." The minister was not mincing his words. "At the last session you voted to take the local option bill out of the hands of the license committee, where it properly belonged, apparently because the license committee was known to be friendly to the bill, and you helped to have it referred to the finance committee which was known to be unfriendly to the bill. For this reason we do not feel that we ought to take too much for granted as to your favorable attitude toward the bill."

"O, well, if you're going to be so blamed suspicious of your best friends I suppose I'll have to give you a statement," said Grafton, with evident impatience, as he swung around to his desk and dashed off a few lines. "There," handing Dr. Jennings a paper, "that's doing more for you than I ever did for anyone before."

Jennings reading: "I am always in favor of reducing to a minimum the evils of strong drink. I am in favor of all wise and just legis-

lation which is framed in the interest of true temperance."

"Senator, this is not at all satisfactory." The minister laid the paper on the long table which occupied the center of the room. "What we want to know is whether you believe that the proposed local option bill is 'framed in the interest of true temperance' and will therefore support it."

"Young man, you're too infernally particular," said Grafton losing his temper and jumping to his feet. The minister rose also and the men stood facing each other with the table between them. "Take my advice and stick to preaching the Gospel. Politics and religion don't mix."

"Evidently they are not very much mixed in your case, Senator." The words were as direct as a lance thrust.

"Now don't get gay with me," said Grafton in a rage, shaking his finger menacingly. "I'm no saint, but I'll take my chances with a lot of the sniveling, Psalm singing, hypocrites in your church. What license have you to come around here telling me how to run my campaign?"

"I'm not telling you how to run your campaign, but simply asking you on what principles you propose to run it," said the minister with unswerving directness. "Am I to under-

THE MINISTER LAID THE PAPER ON THE LONG TABLE WHICH OCCUPIED THE CENTER OF THE ROOM.—See page 18.

stand that you decline to pledge yourself to support the local option bill?"

"Understand anything you please," said Grafton fuming. "I'll have nothing to do with the bunch of pious frauds that make up your Anti-Saloon League. You can't control five hundred votes anyway." He had quite forgotten the boss' instructions.

"That remains to be seen." The minister was cool if the politician wasn't. "Haskins has declared himself in favor of the bill. If you persist in your unfriendly attitude we will issue a circular endorsing Haskins and stating that your position is not satisfactory. Your majority at the last election was a trifle over six thousand. There are ten thousand voters who are members of the various churches in this district. We do not pretend to control them all, but we will mail our circulars to every one personally, we will publish it in every newspaper in the district, we will hold union services in the churches of every town and village in the district, and we will instruct our precinct committees to present the matter to every voter personally. There is a large temperance element which lies entirely outside of church membership, and this element, together with the proportion of church members, whom we believe we can influence, will more than offset your majority of six thousand. We shall re-

gret very much to be obliged to resort to such measures. We would far rather have the pleasure of endorsing you."

"You've already endorsed Haskins and that ought to be 'pleasure' enough for one campaign. You can't spring no double game on me, playing both ends against the middle."

"We are getting tired of the double game by which you give us smooth words and empty promises while you give your vote to our enemies. Evidently we understand each other, Senator Grafton. Good day, sir."

Grafton gazed blankly at the door which closed behind the minister and then muttered to himself: "Damned if I don't think Clifford was right."

CHAPTER TWO.

Almost a Proposal.

THE annual Sunday school picnic of the Princeville Congregational Church had been postponed a month to await the pastor's return from Europe where he had spent his vacation. But at last the long looked for day had arrived. Partly owing to the ideal picnic grounds on the banks of Swan Lake, six miles away, and partly owing to the example of a few of the leading families, the so-called Sunday school picnic was made the occasion for a day's outing by the entire church. So popular had this annual event become that it was now accepted as a matter of course that "everybody" would go. Even "Boss Cliff" went. Mike Bullen could never understand why "Boss Cliff" should want to "break into the pious game" by attending these picnics. Indeed it was perfectly safe to assume that he did not go because of any predilection for the society of Deacon Crackington or because of any hungering for the sweet consolations of religion. Why, then, did he go? For one thing, these occasions were very popular, and James was a politician. And then, Marjorie would be there.

Marjorie Major did not need to depend for her popularity on the fact that she was the only heir to Franklin Major's million or more. Handsome as a madonna, gracious as a queen, quick of wit, radiant in disposition, unspoiled by flattery, and so tender in heart that no appeal for charity was ever made to her in vain, she was loved by the well-to-do as the flower of their set, and idolized by the outcasts of fortune as a patron saint. Dame Rumor had tried to connect Marjorie's name with that of her handsome, young pastor. But, as for that matter, that meddlesome party had tried from time to time to arrange a match between him and every eligible maiden in the church. But the minister had thus far maintained a diplomatic impartiality toward all the maidens of his flock, and if he had any preference it was concealed behind a well-disciplined countenance which was both polite and inscrutable. As some of the slangy ones put it: "He loves his flock but plays no favorites."

Clifford's fondness for Marjorie's society was not unnoticed by the eager eyed gossips who watched every word and glance of the much sought heiress, although in love as in politics he concealed his hand. Accustomed to command rather than to sue he found in this light-hearted, frolicsome Miss the only person in the county who seemed unaware of his

political power and who entirely ignored his "pull." The prestige of success had made him too proud to risk a "throw down" in the presence of others by doing his courting in the open. In the opinion of the worldly wise, however, he had nothing to fear. He was incomparably the most brilliant and successful of those who might be classed as eligible, saving only Dr. Jennings. But was not the independent home of the wealthy and rising young lawyer and politician infinitely to be preferred to the uncertain tenure of the manse, with a whole congregation to please and the criticisms of the ever present fault finders to endure?

The points of likeness between the rivals were so numerous as to be striking. The points of difference were not so noticeable at first. Of nearly the same age, both having just turned thirty, they were tall, well built and athletic. James was distinctly dark, having black hair, black eyes and dark skin. Jennings was crowned by a mass of wavy dark brown hair, but his complexion was clear and his eyes gray. Both were clean shaven and clean featured. A rather large straight nose and wide set, aggressive jaw characterized James. Delicately chiseled nostrils and mouth marked Jennings as a man of native refinement. The politician's face indicated strength, shrewdness and secrecy. The minister's frank, open

countenance revealed a soul that had nothing to hide and nothing to fear. They had been college classmates in one of the small, "fresh water" colleges of the middle west. There the similarity of their tastes and their natural gifts in athletics, in scholarship, in oratory, and in society would seem to qualify them for congenial friendship and honorable rivalry. But for some subtle reason, which neither perhaps could fully analyze, the two never harmonized. Perhaps one reason was that whether in base ball or public debate James always went in to win at any cost, even to buying an umpire or stealing his opponent's manuscript, while Jennings would rather lose a straight game than win a crooked one. Jennings became president of the college Y. M. C. A. James was high in the councils of a certain Greek letter fraternity, the most characteristic features of whose chapter house were pet bull dogs, meerschaum pipes, Sunday card games, and smuggled-in cases of wine. During their senior year a bunch of students were discussing these two strong, clean cut, intellectual young fellows who had so much in common and yet could not seem to become real friends, when Dick Clingman said that the chief difference between them was that one acted with conscience and the other without. Clifford's friends resented this characterization as unfair,

but the popular verdict was that Dick had hit off the essential difference between them as with a stroke of a cartoonist's pencil. And now, years after the youthful rivalries of college had all been passed, by a curious freak of fortune they had been thrown together within the narrow limits of a small inland city, there to fight out the far more serious issues of life in love and politics.

The drive from Princeville to Swan Lake was not the least delightful part of the day's outing. The road lay over fertile, rolling country. Corn fields and groves of oak and maple gave variety to the landscape, while the winding course of Rainbow Creek, so called because of the rainbow trout which were caught there in season, looked like a silver ribbon between its emerald banks. Anticipation was at its highest, however, when they reached the crest of "Bareback," as the treeless ridge was called, from which they caught the first glimpse of the shimmering surface of Swan Lake. For nine miles the green waters of the lake, with the sunlight sparkling on its ripples, stretched away from the foot of the hill. The approach to the lake was gradual, the banks grassy, and the beach white with sand. But on the opposite side white lime-stone cliffs rose sheer out of the water and were covered with forest trees.

Ohs! and Ahs! and shouts of delight broke from the loads of happy picnickers as one by one the crowded vehicles surmounted the crest of Bareback and the matchless view burst upon the eager gaze. About half way down the slope was the big pavilion where the luncheons were eaten and whither the crowds fled for refuge when caught by an untimely summer shower. There was an animated scene by the pavilion when the big busses rolled up. Wriggling, squealing, shouting, laughing loads of boys and girls fairly spilled themselves out in their eagerness for the day's frolic. Surries, single buggies, and automobiles of every description discharged their cargoes of happy humanity and lunch baskets. Noiselessly, except for its chime whistle, like a rich chord from a pipe organ, Franklin Major's big touring car rolled up. Mr. and Mrs. Major, Marjorie, and her friend, Kate Haynes, alighted. Both the young ladies were dressed in white. The pale blue trimmings which peeped through the open work in the waist worn by Marjorie set off her fair complexion to advantage. Pink was Kate's color. Her dark hair, olive skin, and blue eyes made of her what she called (not without a touch of bitterness) "a disappointed brunette."

Close behind came Clifford James in his trim and dashing little runabout. Seated at

his side was his political henchman, Carter Haynes, to whom belonged the triple honor of being postmaster, church treasurer, and Kate's father. When James drew off his gauntlets, goggles and cap, and threw aside his "auto-coat," he stood forth resplendent in an immaculate white flannel outing suit, white silk shirt, white leather belt, and white canvas shoes. A white yachting cap replaced the black leather head piece which he wore when acting as his own chauffeur. The only color visible in his make-up was a pink silk tie and pink silk socks. The young ladies said he was a dream, the old ladies said he was a dude.

With shouts of joy at their release from the confinement of the busses the children and the young people started down the hill on the run for the playgrounds by the lake. With less of capering but with equal pleasure the older persons also started for the ball field, the tennis courts, the swings, the boats, the hammocks, and the benches in the shade. Dr. Jennings had ridden in a 'bus with his Sunday school class of sixteen lively boys "to keep the colts from kicking over the traces." There was nothing in his dress to indicate his calling. Sacerdotal black, priestly collars and all evidences of "the cloth" were laid aside. He wore a dark blue serge outing suit, white silk shirt, with low collar, tan belt, tan oxfords, tan socks,

sailor hat with blue ribbon and blue tie. With his radiant smile he told Deacon Crackington that he felt like a boy again. That worthy wrinkled up his face into what was meant for a smile of indulgence. He would have it understood that so liberal a man as he could pardon such a departure from ministerial proprieties in one whose life was otherwise blameless.

It was perhaps mere coincidence that Miss Haynes, when she saw the minister lingering a little to see that nobody was neglected or forgotten, should wait a little also and suddenly have difficulty in handling her lunch basket.

"Let me help you, Miss Haynes," said the always courteous pastor.

"Thank you, Doctor. How easily you lift it! You must be very strong."

"O, not at all. Not nearly as strong as one of my inches and avoirdupois ought to be."

"You never let any one compliment you. But if 'imitation is the sincerest flattery' you are the most flattered man in Princeville. There is not a boy in town that does not copy your stride and tone and gesture."

"Now you are trying to flatter me with less sincerity, I fear. Are we to stir this can of pineapple into the lemonade?"

They had begun to unpack the baskets.

"All but the can, Doctor."

"Quite right, to be sure. But I believe that

the little savages are ravenous enough to eat can and all. They are in the happiest period of life right now but they don't realize it."

"You talk with the wisdom of a gray-beard, but you're wrong just the same."

"Indeed! Then perhaps you can tell me, with wisdom superior to a gray-beard's, a happier period than that of childhood."

"How about the honeymoon?"

"What do you know about that?"

"Only what my heart tells me." (a sigh)

"Sometimes the honeymoon doesn't last much longer than the new moon, and then the last state is worse than the first. Kindly hand me that box of sandwiches."

"Of course a misfit marriage is a calamity for which there is no cure but divorce."

" 'Till death us do part,' " quoting with upraised hand.

"O, Doctor, this is so sudden!" (archly)

"Not at all. The phrase has been in the ritual since 1087."

"O, how stupid you are today!"

"My normal condition. I don't believe there is coffee enough here for this crowd."

"There is another bag in Marjorie's basket. Don't you ever feel lonely? Don't you sometimes wish you were happily married?"

"I am. I am wedded to my profession."

"O, nonsense! I'm not talking about a busi-

ness but a woman. Wouldn't you be happier if, in addition to your profession, on which you seem to dote, you had a happy home of your own, with a wife who adored you, to welcome you home at night, to cheer you when discouraged, to share your joys and triumphs, and, above all, one who always understood you and believed in you?"

"Such a condition would doubtless be highly agreeable but just now I am more concerned about how to get the cork out of this bottle of pickles."

"Here's a corkscrew—in my basket."

"Thank you."

"Men always need some one to look after them."

"Every bachelor will agree with you there."

"Would you think less of a young lady who should avail herself of her leap-year privilege and propose?"

"My dear Miss Haynes, it is a woman's prerogative to bring the lover to his knees at her feet and no lady ever waives this right." Rising. "Here come the others with the water and ice for lemonade."

A pair of vindictive eyes flashed all the hate, if not of a woman scorned, at least of a woman politely declined, as Dr. Jennings turned to greet Marjorie who was accompanied by Clifford James, carrying a chunk of ice held daint-

ily in a small pair of ice tongs, followed by Sam Blizzard carrying two pails of water.

"Ice as cold as charity and water as thin as a theological argument," said Clifford.

"And here we have a can of a lawyer's most valuable asset," said Dr. Jennings holding up a can which he took from a lunch basket.

"What is it?" asked two or three in unison.

"Deviled tongue."

Sam guffawed immoderately at the rather unclerical retort, but Marjorie said:

"Come, gentlemen, quit this raillery and be friends."

"We ought to be the best of friends," said the minister lightly, "for in a certain sense a minister and a successful criminal lawyer are engaged in the same work."

"In what way?" asked Marjorie in surprise.

"Saving sinners," said Jennings with mock gravity, while all laughed but Clifford.

"Don't you regard it as an honor, Mr. James, to have your profession put in the same class with the ministry?" asked Marjorie as she stirred and sipped the lemonade.

"Almost as much of an honor as to be classed with 'con men' and easy-money grafters." Clifford was about as amiable as a jeweled wine glass filled with vitriol.

"O, come now, cheer up," said Marjorie lightly. "You don't mean that. Try some of

this lemonade and give us a toast to the ministry."

All filled glasses while Clifford said:

"The ministry: the profession which is painfully pious, stupidly sanctimonius, and morbidly moral—when watched—and which takes hard earned money from credulous dupes by retailing platitudes and truisms and bogus passports to a mythical heaven."

All were horrified at this bold and slashing sarcasm. Before even Marjorie could find voice Sam's characteristic drawl was heard:

"Here's to the lawyer, who shields the lawbreaker and makes crime safe, who defeats justice with the handy technicality, who grows fat on other people's troubles, who accepts bribes with impunity by calling them retainers, and who sells both brains and conscience to the highest bidder."

Clifford scowled savagely at Sam. The minister's glance showed that he was greatly amused by the hot volley from his rough and ready defender. But Marjorie stamped her foot and said:

"Gentlemen, you must stop this banter which is too biting to be amusing. I will give you a toast, and let no one fail to drink on pain of being outlawed and excommunicated," with a little gesture first toward the lawyer and

"The Law and the Gospel: we need them both: the Law to keep us straight, and the Gospel to keep us sweet."

Amid exclamations of "Good" and "Well said" all raised their glasses and drank.

"Tommy Dickens gave the festivities a flying start by tumbling into the lake," said Sam, putting down his tumbler.

"Is he being cared for?" asked the pastor quickly.

"O, yes," replied Sam, "his mother put him right to bed in the ground-keeper's house and his clothes are now flapping on a line."

"And Susie Tennant fell out of a swing and raised a bump on her forehead like a robin's egg," said Marjorie.

"And Willie Wimbleton, in his fresh white duck suit, sat down in an open faced raspberry pie," added Clifford.

"Rather a bad beginning," commented the Doctor.

"Such things must be expected," said Sam oracularly.

"I have promised to umpire a game of ball for the boys," said Dr. Jennings addressing Marjorie, "Wouldn't you like to come over and watch the sport?"

"Beg pardon, Miss Major," broke in Clifford ,"but we were speaking of boating a few

moments ago. Did I understand that you would like to go sailing?"

"No, Mr. James," replied the fair maiden, "you mentioned the boats, I believe, but you did not ask me to go. But if I am to understand that I am honored by two invitations at once I shall have to be strictly impartial as between you gentlemen and let it be decided by my favorite sport."

"Which is?" asked the minister.

"Boating?" asked the lawyer.

"Base ball," answered the maid.

Two pairs of eyes blazed vindictively as the young divine started for the ball grounds accompanied by the fairest flower of his parish.

CHAPTER THREE.

Council of War.

POLITICALLY the situation was getting desperate for the "organization." Reports from every precinct told of revolt. The spirit of independence was in the air. And now that the issue was clearly drawn between Grafton, the ally of the liquor interests and the promoter of what was believed to be a corrupt land deal, as against Haskins, who was known to be clean and incorruptible and an advocate of the principle of local option, voters everywhere, who had always voted the party ticket straight, were declaring that they would "scratch" Grafton.

Grafton was in a fright and a fury. Haynes, secure in his federal office, was still solicitous for the safety of the "organization" which secured his appointment. Clifford, cool and self-mastered as ever, saw clearly the danger of defeat with its consequent loss of prestige if not of leadership. And now he had his own personal reasons for the malignant hatred which he nursed toward the brilliant young minister who was the leader and the moving spirit of the opposition. To oppose the boss at any point was dangerous. To cross him

both in politics and love was more perilous than robbing a bear of her whelps.

They were having a council of war, these three. Seated about a table in Clifford's private office they were proposing plans to retrieve a desperate situation. As usual James let his aides speak first, reserving his opinion.

"They've got us on the run," said Grafton. "The blankety blank reformers have an organization nearly as good as ours. They have committees at every precinct and are making a personal canvass that reaches every voter. Instead of depending on hot air as in the past this political preacher is showing them how to get the votes. If we don't stand from under we're going to get caught in a 'land slide.'" The Honorable Bill was unmistakably vexed.

"What do you propose that we do?" asked Clifford.

"There is only one thing to do, and that is to notify the Liquor Dealers' Association to send us enough money to buy our way in." Grafton's confidence in the corrupting power of money was that of a man who was not unconscious in his own heart of its power to such ends.

"You'll have to guess again," said Clifford. "We have money enough now to take care of the floaters, and there is no danger of any of them voting the temperance ticket anyway. We

are losing a class of voters who cannot be influenced directly by money."

"Why not have Bill announce himself in favor of the local option bill and tip off to the liquor people that he will be with them all right when it comes to a show down?" This ingenuous suggestion was offered by the eminently respectable Haynes.

"The brewers won't stand for any such game," said Clifford. "They are fighting for their lives and they won't let us use their money to fan the temperance flame which is sweeping the country."

There was a moment's silence. The two subordinates had played their last cards. Then the boss spoke.

"There is only one thing to do and that is to get rid of Jennings."

"Get rid of Jennings!" exclaimed both in a breath.

"How are you going to persuade him to change his base?" asked Grafton. He evidently thought that the chief had lost his cunning.

"I'll not try to persuade him, I'll persuade his church."

"His church!" said Grafton, still more doubting Clifford's sagacity. "You might as well try to get them to set fire to the steeple. Why, man, that congregation worships the minister more than it worships Almighty God."

"I know that he is popular, but while the people think much of him they think much more of their own pocket books. We will make him too expensive a luxury."

"Well, if you know how to do that you may do the steering." Grafton lit a cigar and leaned back in his chair with the air of a man who washes his hands of an impossible task.

"It is not so difficult. We will ask all of our friends to cut off their subscriptions toward the minister's salary. This will create a big deficit. It will then be up to the rest of the church either to make good the shortage or dismiss the minister. It's an easy guess to tell what that bunch of tightwads will do when up against that proposition. Carter, have you the subscription list with you?"

Haynes pulled out a paper from his pocket while Clifford took up a pencil and pad of paper from the table.

"How much do you give, Carter?"

"Fifty dollars a year."

Clifford wrote down the figures.

"How much do you give, Bill?"

"Not a damn cent," said that eminent statesman.

"But Mrs. Grafton pays ten dollars a quarter or forty dollars a year," said Haynes, looking at his list.

"Forty dollars," said Clifford, writing it down.

"Not being quite so religious as 'Deacon' Haynes I am giving only twenty-five," continued Clifford, writing it down. At this evidence of the superior piety of "Deacon" Haynes Grafton broke into a guffaw.

"How much does Dr. Lansing give?"

"One hundred dollars."

"One hundred dollars," said Clifford, as the pencil made the figures.

"How are you going to get him to quit?" said Grafton. "He's one of the prayer meeting bunch, one of the 'pillars' they call him."

"He'll have to do it or we'll make Dr. Dexter county physician. How much does Dr. Dexter give?"

"Fifty dollars."

"Fifty dollars," noted the boss. "He'll have to cut that off or give up hope of being county physician next year. How about Jenkins, the gas man?"

"Seventy-five dollars."

"Seventy-five off. He'll not hesitate as long as he is asking for a new franchise. What is Josh. Scribner doing?"

"He's in the forty dollar class."

"Forty off. As long as his office does the county printing he is wise enough to take orders. Is Pennington, the county clerk on the list?"

"Yes," said Haynes. "He's just about as

pious as you are, Cliff. He gives twenty-five, too."

"Twenty-five," said Clifford. "Haw, haw," said Grafton.

"I got old man Richard's boy a clerkship in Washington. I believe that he will oblige me in this matter. How much is he down for?"

"Forty."

"Forty it is. Now, let's see how much we have," said Clifford, adding up the figures. "Four hundred and forty-five."

"Four-forty-five wouldn't phase that church for a minute," broke in Grafton. "They would make it right up and then vote an increase in salary."

"Don't go off at half cock, Bill. How much does Major give?"

"Major!" both exclaimed.

"He gives two hundred and fifty regularly, and usually gives that much more in special gifts toward repairs and to make up deficits. But you can't do a thing with him."

"Every man has his price," said the boss cynically.

"Yes," said Haynes, "but how are you going to buy a millionaire?"

"With a seat in congress."

Grafton whistled. A great light began to dawn on the two subordinates. Clifford continued:

"Representative Malone is to retire at the close of his present term. It is agreed that his successor is to come from this end of the district. That leaves the nomination to us. Major has political aspirations. He will join us in order to get the nomination. With his help and with those we can influence we can cause an immediate shortage of a thousand or more in the church finances. We will point out that this means not the loss of a single thousand but a permanent loss to the church of a thousand a year as long as the present pastor is retained."

"I believe you can turn the trick," said Grafton in undisguised admiration.

"If Major is in his office in the bank down stairs now I will ask him to come up." Clifford picked up his phone and the following one-sided conversation was heard:

"Main 3022. This is Mr. James. Is Mr. Major in? * * * Hello, Mr. Major, would it be convenient for you to step up to my office for a moment? * * * Thank you. Good bye."

"Now, if you fellows will just step into the next room I'll see if we can't swing this eminent heavy weight into line."

The door had hardly closed behind the two henchmen when a heavy, dignified step was heard coming up the stairs. The door opened and Franklin Major walked into the office.

With the usual word of greeting Major took the polished oak armchair indicated by James and drew it to the shining table. With characteristic directness James went to the heart of the matter.

"As you know, Mr. Major, it is our turn to name the representative from this district to succeed Malone who retires. How would you like to take the seat?"

"I would be delighted, Mr. James. My business is in such shape now that I can get away and I would enjoy nothing more than a congressional career."

"Well, we have considered the matter and have decided to tender you the nomination if you desire it."

There was no doubt about the pleasure which this announcement gave the wealthy banker.

"You use the word 'we,' of course, in the editorial sense. I understand perfectly well and shall thank you for the nomination."

Dismissing this recognition of his leadership and the thanks with a wave of the hand Clifford continued:

"Of course you understand, Mr. Major, that it has been customary for the congressional candidate to bear the bulk of the campaign expenses."

"Certainly, certainly. It will give me

pleasure to hand you a check for five thousand dollars at once, if that will be satisfactory?"

"No checks, Mr. Major. You name a reasonable figure, but it must be in currency."

The wary politician had played the game long enough to know that signatures and endorsements sometimes reappear at most embarrassing moments.

"To be sure. I'll send it up in a satchel." The banker also was "wise."

Then Clifford shifted his position and came to the ticklish point.

"One other matter, Mr. Major. We must secure the resignation of Dr. Jennings."

Major dropped his glasses and fell back in his chair.

"The resignation of Dr. Jennings! You astonish me. What has he to do with it?"

"He should have nothing to do with it. But instead of sticking to the pulpit where he belongs he has taken to the stump. Instead of preaching the Gospel he is meddling in politics. He is making war on the organization. He has started a boycott on Grafton. Our nomination in this district has always been equivalent to an election, but unless we can get rid of this disturber of the peace he will smash the machine and fill every office with opposition candidates." Clifford's eyes blazed with anger.

"Well, you surely don't expect me to make

war on my pastor because he is doing what he believes to be his duty as a citizen?" said Major after a blank pause.

"I expect every friend of the organization to do whatever is necessary for success," said Clifford sharply. "He is fighting us, and in this war there can be no neutrals."

Major was not used to being talked to like this, but the masterful young man looked him straight in the eye.

"Why, man, it is impossible to unseat him. the congregation idolizes him."

"Whatever ought to be done can be done. Here, look at this list. By the withdrawal of these subscriptions, and a few others which we can control, we can cause an immediate deficit of twelve hundred or more in the church finances. This will make his position untenable and he will have to resign."

"But they would call it a political conspiracy," protested the fast weakening Major, "and it would only make him the more popular. Deacon Crackington would lead the opposition and we would be beaten three to one."

"Deacon Crackington is one of those colorless individuals whose rule of life is to follow the line of least resistance. His reputation for piety is due chiefly to a lack of red blood. He loves his enemies because nature forgot to put any fight into his make-up. Like all timid

people, he is stingy. Make it clear to him that if the minister is retained he will have to double his subscription. That will give him a cramp in the pocket nerve. Show him that the church will be ripped in two by a feud. Then point out to him that it is to the pastor's best interests to go where he will not have a minority opposed to him, and that his best friends ought to advise him to seek another field. And lastly tell him that it is for the interest of the church to have a pastor on whom all can agree rather than to have the church permanently split. Crackington is the leader of the prayer-meeting crowd. You are the leader of the business men. Whatever you two advocate will go through. For even if there was opposition it would fail for lack of leadership."

Major remained silent with bowed head for several minutes. He realized keenly how contemptible a trick it was to drive out a high-minded and fearless minister for doing what every decent citizen ought to endorse and applaud. But on the other hand he reasoned that so talented a man as Dr. Jennings would easily find another and perhaps a better pulpit. If James was bringing his powerful political forces to bear on the minister he would sooner or later have to go anyway; and then there was the glittering prize of the representative's

seat with a social career in Washington for his wife and daughter.

"Very well," he said at length, "I'll see what I can do with Deacon Crackington."

"You can land him," said James rising and shaking hands with Major with unwonted cordiality, "and remember that the minister's resignation means your election."

Nothing could better illustrate the discipline maintained by James than the ease with which Haynes induced the men on the list to withdraw their subscriptions. A whispered explanation was in many cases all that was necessary. Dr. Lansing protested and declared that he wouldn't "knife the minister for fighting the devil." But a little later a telephone message summoned him to the boss' office, and when he returned he had drawn in his horns. Greenwood, the grocer, demurred at first, but when told plainly to get in line or the whole "gang" would transfer their trade to Stapleton he made haste to comply. Others there were who could not be handled in quite so summary a manner. Thus, there was Silas Henstraw, a rich, retired farmer, and as independent as the great pyramid. But his son, Silas, was teller in the First National Bank. Major called young Silas into his private office and explained that if the bank president went to Congress the teller would be made cashier.

While the flush of pleasure was still on the young man's face it was explained that the minister's resignation was necessary to bring about this desirable result. Could he secure his father's co-operation to this end? Certainly he could.

Thus the method was adapted to the man. Orders were issued to those who were under control. Diplomacy and persuasion were used on those who were in any way open to influence.

Without great difficulty a shrinkage of a little over twelve hundred dollars in the church subscription list was caused. Then Major took Deacon Crackington in hand. At the first suggestion of asking for the minister's resignation the deacon flamed up in righteous indignation. Was not Dr. Jennings the most brilliant preacher, the most faithful pastor, and the best all-around man, any way you take him, that the church had ever had? And was not the church prospering under his administration as never before? And was not the fight he was now waging for local option the most gallant as well as the most practical and effective ever carried on by the reform forces?

But Clifford's marvelous judgment of men was seen in the accuracy with which he had taken the deacon's measure. Calming him with the assurance that he was proposing only

what would be, under the circumstances, for the minister's highest interest, Major played skillfully first upon his avarice, then upon his timidity, and lastly upon his religiousness, pointing out how much more good the First Congregational Church of Princeville could do "in the Master's kingdom" when united and harmonious than when hopelessly split. Crackington, awed by the size of the defection and impressed by Major's plausible reasoning, hemmed and hawed a little, asked a few irrelevant questions, and finally said that, while the minister didn't have any better friend in the church than he, he reckoned that under the circumstances a change would be best for both pastor and people. Before the interview closed it was agreed that when the question came to vote Deacon Crackington should be the one to make a speech, giving the pastor full credit for his sterling qualities, but also pointing out the reasons why the pastorate ought to be terminated.

The conspiracy threw not only the church but the entire community into a fever of excitement. It was the one absorbing topic wherever two or three or more were gathered together. Of course the conspirators were too shrewd to give out publicly the real reason for their action. The ostensible reasons assigned were "general dissatisfaction," "deterioration

in the preaching," "too much politics and not enough religion," "personal dislike," etc. While these reasons were so preposterous as to deceive none who did not want to be deceived, they passed current and relieved the conspirators from the necessity of giving their real reasons.

When affairs were ripe Franklin Major and Carter Haynes called on the minister. With every evidence of regret they informed their pastor of the dissatisfaction which had grown up, of the form which it had taken, and of the serious financial embarrassment in which the church found itself. What would he suggest? Looking his false friends straight in the eye in a way that made them uneasy, Dr. Jennings replied immediately:

"There is only one thing possible under the circumstances, gentlemen. I will resign."

CHAPTER FOUR.

The Unexpected.

THE meeting of the Princeville Congregational Church which was called to act on the pastor's resignation was a mass meeting. Feeling ran high in the community. Everybody was lined up on one side or the other. The rank and file of the congregation was solidly on the minister's side and emphatically in favor of declining to accept the resignation. But those whom "the organization" could control, and they comprised most of the real leaders in the church, were quietly but firmly in favor of accepting the resignation.

All sorts of rumors were afloat. Some said that the clergyman had received a call to a large city church. Others that he was going to be married,—but just why such an increase in pastoral efficiency should call for a dissolution of the pastoral relation was not apparent. Another story was that he intended to withdraw from the ministry to take up literary work and lecturing in which he was notably successful. Still another report was that he was tired of the political struggle. But this was so utterly at variance with the minister's

well known "staying qualities" that it was easily believed that Grafton started the rumor.

There was a strained stillness when Major, as chairman of the board of trustees, called the meeting to order. Would Deacon Crackington please open the meeting with prayer? That worthy arose and besought the Almighty to bless everybody in general, including "the heathen who sit in darkness," and those of us who live "in the glorious light of the Gospel," and prayed that we might be worthy of our blessings and faithful to our duties, and concluded by asking Divine guidance in the important business for the transaction of which they were assembled. In view of the fact that he and the others had agreed in advance as to exactly what should be done at the meeting it is difficult to see just where he expected the guidance of the Almighty to come in.

Major then called on Mr. Haynes to state the object of the meeting. Rising, with a sheet of paper in his hand, Haynes announced that the meeting was called to act upon the resignation of the Rev. Hiram Jennings as pastor of the Princeville Congregational Church, which resignation he held in his hand and would proceed to read. After the usual introduction of date, place and formal address, the letter ran as follows:

Dearly Beloved:

Having been informed that a very considerable number in the church is opposed to the work and methods of the present ministry I do hereby present my resignation as minister of this church, the same to take effect immediately.

Assuring you that my eagerness to be of service in the Master's kingdom is equalled only by my willingness to step aside when my presence is no longer a help but a hindrance, and praying that God's richest blessing may always be your portion, I remain, Your Affectionate Pastor,

HIRAM JENNINGS.

Indignation that any one had dared to insinuate that the pastor's presence was a "hindrance" in any good work showed on many a set countenance while the simple tenderness of the closing words caused many an eye to grow dim.

"Mr. Chairman," continued Haynes, smooth and self-possessed, "I yield to no man in appreciation of Dr. Jennings' sterling ability. He is a strong preacher and a faithful pastor. But no man can please everybody, and it is not strange, perhaps, that in his long pastorate of seven years even he should alienate a consid-

erable element in the church. I, as treasurer, am in a position to know pretty accurately the feelings of the whole church toward the pastor. For when you ask a man to give his money you touch the spot nearest his heart. The number of those who are dissaffected has grown rapidly of late. I have been informed by various parties that their pledges to the church, amounting in the aggregate to something over twelve hundred dollars, will be positively withdrawn unless there is a change of pastors. This, of course, presents an impossible situation. For, with such a defection as that, we not only could not pay our pastor his salary, but we would be in grave danger of permanently splitting the church. The resignation is, of course, presented in good faith. Under the circumstances the pastor does not care to stay. With us it is not a matter in which we can consult our feelings, but the acceptance is a necessity. I, therefore, move, Mr. Chairman, that we accept the resignation."

The congregation sat in breathless silence during the reading of the resignation and the remarks of Haynes. Each one looked at his neighbor when Haynes sat down as if wondering who would voice the general indignation at the idea of accepting the resignation, when Deacon Crackington, true to the coaching he had received, rose to his feet, cleared his

creaky throat and addressed the chair. There was a general feeling of relief, for surely the Godly old deacon was about to speak with no uncertain sound in defence of his pastor.

"Mr. Chairman, I am sure that I express the sentiment of this company when I say that Dr. Jennings is the best pastor that this church ever had." A chorus of "Amens" revealed a temper which made Major uneasy. "Our church has prospered under his administration until it has reached the highest point in its history." Cries of "True," "Yes," "So it has," greeted this tribute. "As a preacher he is earnest, scholarly, scriptural, and convincing. As a pastor he is cheering to the sick, kind to the unfortunate, cordial with strangers, and good to everybody." Again there was a chorus of "Amens," while some slangy person cried, "That's right."

"But,"—continued the deacon. A look of dismay swept over the room. A sound suspiciously like a groan was heard. What had he to do with any "buts" after such a glowing tribute?

"But, if conditions have arisen which make a continuance of his high usefulness out of the question I am too good a friend of Dr. Jennings to refuse to release him at his own request. Obviously it is to his interest to withdraw at flood tide rather than to wait for the ebb; and it

would be much better for him to go now to some new field, where he could have a united church and repeat his splendid success, rather than to struggle on here with a divided constituency. Therefore, as a friend of the pastor and with an eye to his highest good, I second the motion."

The audience was aghast. Could they believe their ears? Who would rise and speak what was bursting in their hearts for utterance? O, that the people might find a Voice! Dr. Lansing arose. A look of expectancy swept over the faces. He was a friend of the pastor's and was regarded as a strong, good man.

"Mr. Chairman, I would like to offer an amendment to the motion to the effect that we accept the resignation with greatest reluctance and that we bear our testimony to the splendid character and ability of Dr. Jennings."

"Do the gentlemen who made and seconded the original motion accept the amendment?" asked Major. Both Haynes and Crackington made haste to say "Certainly." "Then," said Major, "the amendment will be added without the formality of a vote. Are there any remarks on the question as amended?"

There was an uneasy movement in the audience. Would nobody speak? It began to look as though Clifford was right in saying that the leaders would all be under control and

that any opposition would be ineffective for lack of a strong voice to give it utterance.

"All those in favor of the motion—." So it was really going to be "railroaded" through! Hope sank in many a heart. Then the unexpected happened.

"Mr. Chairman," said a bold, clear voice from a rear seat. All twisted their heads in nervous haste. It was plain, blunt, homely, honest, illiterate Sam Blizzard, the last man who might have been expected to raise his voice against such men as Deacon Crackington, Franklin Major, Dr. Lansing, Carter Haynes and the others.

"Mr. Chairman, I don't know as I ought to rush in where angels fear to tread but I'd just kind o' like to know what it is that so many people have all of a sudden against 'the best pastor the church ever had'?" There was a ring in his voice which commanded attention. Major moved uneasily in his seat. Sam looked hard at Haynes, and he replied without the formality of addressing the chair that it was "general dissatisfaction."

"General deviltry!" exclaimed Sam in a rage. "This is a conspiracy. A lot of people who ought to be in better business are joining hands with the Whisky Devil to drive out the bravest and most God-fearing minister we ever had."

"Mr. Chairman," cried Haynes, leaping to his feet, "this is an outrage. Whatever opinion Mr. Blizzard may have of the rest of us he cannot go unrebuked in my presence when he speaks of Deacon Crackington as joining hands with the Whisky Devil."

Deacon Crackington's piety was the conspirators' trump card. They were playing it rather early in the game.

"That doddering old dolt!" said Sam with slashing sarcasm, "without wit enough to see that he is being used as a tool by the whisky crowd and without real religion enough to keep him from stabbing his pastor in the back!"

The effect of these bold and startling words was indescribable. While many were shocked beyond measure at hearing the deacon's piety thus fiercely challenged there was in the minds of most of the congregation a half conscious and hitherto unexpressed feeling that Deacon Crackington was getting into his dotage, and that while he was not a conscious hypocrite his piety had been greatly overrated.

"Out of order," shouted Major pounding on the table with a hymn book. There was no gavel in the church.

"I may be out of order but I ain't out of breath," said Sam, looking the august chairman straight in the eye, "and I'm a'goin' to make one or two mild observations before this

incident is closed. And it won't do you no good to call time on me till I've done, neither."

Here Haynes "butted in."

"Perhaps this balmy zephyr, who so freely defames men better than himself, can explain the attitude of our honorable chairman on this question."

There was a breathless, heart-halting silence. Would this dashing champion, who had leaped into the lists and was smiting right and left with such mighty blows, dare to raise his cudgel against the most highly honored citizen in the community? Slowly and deliberately Sam began, looking straight at Major in a way that made that worthy wince:

"I don't know why our honorable chairman should want to throw down his pastor on account of a little deficit which he could pay out of either vest pocket any day and never miss it any more than I do when I hand a newsboy a nickel and tell him to keep the change. But when I see him lining up with a lot of low down, lick-spittle, rat-hole politicians, that would make any honest man hold his nose till he could get away, you can't make me believe that he is doing it for nothing."

Cries of "Order" and "For Shame" came from different parts of the room, and Dr. Lansing leaped to his feet:

"Mr. Chairman, I protest against the de-

faming of good men by this loud-mouthed ignoramus. I call for a vote on the question."

Amid confused cries of "Question," "Order," "No," "Go on, Sam," the chairman said:

"All those in favor—"

"Hold on there, Mr. Chairman," said Sam, with the same ring of authority in his voice which had commanded a hearing every time he had spoken, "remarks are in order, I believe, and I still have a few up my sleeve."

"Mr. Chairman," broke in Haynes, jumping up, "I rise to a point of order. That man has no right to denounce both the religion and the temperance principles of those of us who think it wise to accept the pastor's resignation."

In a moment Haynes was sorry that he spoke.

"You blathering hypocrite," said Sam, turning full upon him, "when I saw you sneaking out of the back door of Mike Bullen's saloon this morning, like a pole cat, you didn't stop to say whether it was your religion or your temperance principles that took you in."

Haynes shrank back into his seat as though struck by a blast of live steam. The crowd was delirious with joy. There was an atmosphere of expectant uncertainty. Nobody knew where the lightning would strike next but everybody was sure that it would strike. The people had found their Voice. No man cared again to

brave the Blizzard. Sam had the floor.

"It don't take no eye at all to see that this whole thing is a frame-up to beat Dr. Jennings. And it don't take no brains to tell who is back of it. It is a shame and a disgrace to the church to kick out a minister for standing for temperance and public decency. The very men who are fighting him wouldn't have no use for him if he wasn't man enough to fight 'em to a finish. I understand that some people have been calling our minister a quitter for resigning. Why, he is just simply putting it up to us to see if we are quitters. He says in his resignation that he has been informed that a considerable number are opposed to him. He had to resign to find out if they were in the majority. He says that he does not want to be a hindrance in the Master's kingdom. That means that we are to vote on the question as to whether we regard him as a hindrance. If by our votes we show that we do not regard him as a hindrance he will stay and fight this rotten politico-whisky gang until the whole 'machine' goes to the scrap heap. And I might remark in passing that any man who says that Hiram Jennings is a hindrance to any good work is as foul-mouthed a liar as ever dropped into the bottomless pit. Some of these pious churchmen seem greatly troubled lest their defection may split the church. Bah! Let a few of the

whited sepulchers get out and the church will smell sweeter. The amendment which was tacked on, like a tail on a kite to make it fly, makes a liar of everyone who votes for it. For it says that we accept the resignation with the greatest reluctance, while if we have any reluctance at all we won't accept it. The big bluff which this gang of knockers puts up is that the salary can't be raised if they and their friends back off the subscription list. Now listen to me while I call them. If this resignation is not accepted I will double my own subscription and I will take that list out of Mr. Haynes' hands and raise money enough to cover their deficit dollar for dollar. Now it is strictly up to this church to show whether it means business or not; whether it has the courage of its convictions; whether it dares to do right even when it costs something; whether it will back up a brave pastor, and whether it fears God Almighty or the gang of political blacklegs who run this town."

While Sam was blazing away with his gatling-gun style of speech not a breath nor a rustle was heard. When he sat down there was a burst of applause in which were mingled cries of "Amen," "Good," and "That's right." Major, with set face, rose and said:

"All in favor of the motion manifest it by saying "Ay."

About a dozen voices answered "Ay" rather noisily.

"Those opposed say "No," ordered the chairman.

"NO," answered a great chorus of voices.

"The motion is carried," said Major with startling audacity.

"I call for a rising vote," cried Sam.

Slowly and with obvious reluctance the chairman said:

"All in favor of the motion please rise."

Standing up to vote for a measure that is hopelessly lost is a very different matter from calling out "Ay" from one's seat. Of those who had voted in favor of the motion only Deacon Crackington and Carter Haynes rose to their feet.

"Those opposed rise," said Major.

With one impulse the entire congregation seemed to spring to their feet.

"The motion appears to be lost," said Major.

And the meeting adjourned.

CHAPTER FIVE.

The Strong Hand.

"MIKE, we're up against it." The Hon. William E. Grafton was pacing the floor of his office nervously when the thick-necked saloonkeeper entered.

"What's the matter, Bill. Losin' your nerve?" said Bullen, rolling the stump of a cigar over in his mouth and taking a seat on the corner of the table.

"Not on your life," said Grafton, self assertively, " but we're going to lose this election."

"Aw, g'wan. I'll lose my taste for booze and you'll lose your taste for graft before Boss Cliff will lose an election."

"Well, we're going to lose all right. Even Cliff is scared."

"Cliff scared! Now you've got me listening. Uncork and tell me what there is in earth or hell that can scare the boss."

"Well, of course, he don't go round showing no white feather, but I can see that he is having troubles that he never had before."

"Name the brand."

"The preacher."

"What, that white-livered text shooter!

Cliff can have him canned if he bats an eye at us."

"Cliff tried to have him canned but lost out."

"Cliff lost! How could he lose when he holds all the cards?"

"He went out of his class. Instead of sticking to politics he stirred up a church row and got stung."

"Who is there in that gospel ice-house that had the nerve to buck against the boss?"

"That pig-headed Blizzard put up a roar and stopped the game just when it was all framed to slide the parson down the resignation chute."

"We'll send Blizzard where they never have anything but hot winds." Mike's face was far from amiable.

"That's the talk, Mike. Only we mus'n't waste any time on Blizzard. Jennings is the man we must get." Grafton now had lowered his tone and was growing confidential in manner.

"How are you going to do it?" asked Bullen bluntly.

"You're going to do it, Mike, with your little bung starter."

"Not fer mine," said the bully. "I don't take on no knock-out jobs just to keep you in your easy chair at the capitol. You'll have to win your own fight."

"But this is your fight, Mike. If I lose my seat you stand to lose your business. For unless we can side track the local option bill Prince county will go as dry as an empty beer wagon."

"What does Cliff think about it?" asked Bullen, growing suddenly serious at the mention of local option.

"He ain't a'goin' to know a thing about it till it's pulled off. We'll hand him a neat little surprise. By removing his enemy without giving him either trouble or risk we'll have a pull with him in the future that nothing can beat."

"But if we slug him just before election it'll make more votes for local option than the preacher could make in a lifetime," said Bullen, cautiously.

"Not if we throw them off the scent," replied Grafton with fox-like cunning. "You pick off his ticker and bank roll. Drop them into the pocket of the first hobo that comes in for a schooner. Then have him pinched. That makes it a clear case of knock-out and robbery, and the hold-up man caught with the goods."

"But where's a fellow going to find a chance to hand it to him? That's no daylight job and his nibs is no night hawk."

"Nothing easier," said Grafton, warming to the plot as he noted how easily Bullen was being led on. "Every Wednesday night after prayer meeting he walks from the church

down Second street to his home. This takes him past Joyce and Beam's lumber yard at just about 9:15. He is almost always alone. It isn't a hundred feet from your back door to the big lumber piles. You can have a bunch of the boys in your place all the evening. Pass around a little beer and make them happy. A few minutes after nine slip out quietly, cut the electric light wire, making the street as dark as a hole in a nigger's plug hat. Edge up close to the sidewalk. Listen for his footstep. Then, biff, and you're back in a minute drinking with the boys. When the holler is raised the boys will swear you out an iron-clad alibi if you should need it. It's a cinch, Mike. You don't take no chance at all. You can't lose."

Mike, however, was not so sure.

"But s'pose I miss? They say he used to be a hot shot pitcher on his college team, and his gym work keeps him in great form. I don't want no mix up with him."

"Now, don't come the baby act, Mike. Didn't you just call him a white-livered text shooter?"

"Don't you talk to me about no baby act, you big duffer," said Bullen, with a growl. "You're framing up this game so that you take all the stakes and I take all the risk."

"Why, Mike, there ain't any risk at all," said Grafton, soothingly, as one would stroke

the ruffled neck of a bull pup. "When you land on him in the dark with your big stick he don't stand no more show than a baby in a bear's cage. Putting him down and out will not only help me, but it will give you a great stand-in with Cliff and may save your business. I don't know what better stakes you could want in a sure thing game. Come, now, old man, just take on this little job and you'll never be sorry."

"When could we do it?" said Bullen hesitating.

"Tonight. This is Wednesday."

"Tonight!" Bullen's eyes grew big.

"Sure. The sooner the quicker."

"All right," said Bullen, setting his jaw.

"Good," said Grafton in glee, seizing Bullen's right hand in his own and slapping him on the back with his left. "You're the game cock. But say, play it safe. We don't want no ambulance case. It must be to the morgue with him."

To which amiable admonition Bullen grimly replied:

"Trust your uncle with his little slap stick."

CHAPTER SIX.

Mike's Mistake.

THE night was clear and cool. The young moon was so near the horizon that the night was comparatively dark in spite of the stars. The roar of the 9:12 Chicago express could be heard dying away in the distance. The baying of a hound on the hilltop was answered by a deep bark from the opposite side of the town. Then all was still. The air itself seemed hushed and listening. Suddenly the arc light at the corner of Second and Pearl streets went out. But there was nobody on the streets to notice it. A bit of shingle lying on the ground behind a big lumber pile snapped. Then all was still again.

A quick, firm footstep is heard. It is approaching. In the dim light the erect, vigorous figure of a young man can be seen. Wearing a light overcoat and stiff hat, he strides along in confident security passing within two feet of the towering pile of lumber. A burly figure, armed with a baseball bat, takes a step out of the shadow. The bat swings swiftly, there is a muffled thud, and the victim goes down like a sack of grain without even a groan. Quick as thought the assassin rolls the motionless

form over and reaches for watch and wallet, when he utters a cry of terror.

"My God, it's Cliff!"

The look of unspeakable horror on his face gave way at once to one of fear and caution as a swift, strong step is heard approaching. Mike had just time to reach for his bat when Hiram Jennings strode up. With a muttered curse the bully said, "I'll get you yet," striking viciously as he spoke squarely at the minister's head. But, alas for Mike! The college athlete is on his guard and all of the bully's worst fears are realized. With lynx-like agility Jennings side-stepped the blow, and, as the club went crashing to the ground, he landed a full arm, right handed swing squarely on Bullen's jaw. Bullen went down and out. Mike is reported to have said at a later time that if he had his choice he would rather be kicked by a mule than "connect with the gospel slinger's good right."

With one glance at Bullen's silent form, Dr. Jennings bent over the other prostrate body and discovered that it was his worst enemy. Hastily slipping his right hand over the heart he felt the throb of life. "Help, help," he cried at the top of his voice, at the same time raising James' head and trying to restore him to consciousness. Carter Haynes happened to be passing on Front street, half a block away, and

he came on the run. Picking James up bodily they started with him to Dr. Quackenbos' drug store on the corner. Meeting the night policeman on the way they directed him to Bullen's resting place. The thug regained consciousness just in time to recognize the officer and was promptly clapped into "the village bastile," to use the favorite expression of the Princeville Recorder.

At the drug store Dr. Dexter, who was quickly summoned, pronounced James' injuries not necessarily serious. The blow, which would have felled an ox, had it landed full and fair, had, luckily for James, struck on the side of his head. The stiff Derby had broken and deflected the blow somewhat. There was a great contusion on the side of the head and a large purple swelling on the shoulder where the glancing bat had stopped. James quickly responded to the restoratives which were administered and opened his eyes. As he looked around upon the shelves full of bottles, the show cases, and the circle of faces about him he asked with imperturbable coolness:

"What kind of a deal is this?"

The tense anxiety found relief in a general laugh at this characteristic question. When told he had been nearly brained by a sandbagger he felt of his bandaged head and, without saying a word, cautiously raised himself to his

feet. When asked how he felt he said with laconic brevity: "Groggy." Declining all other offers of assistance he steadied himself on Carter Haynes' arm and walked to his home.

CHAPTER SEVEN.

Playing It Safe.

THE next morning Clifford was at his office as usual. There was a bandage around his head, he moved his left arm with difficulty, and he had what he called an exploding headache. His first callers were Grafton and Bullen. Grafton had persuaded Major to furnish bail for Bullen. The churchman's scruples against going bail for a saloonkeeper and would-be assassin were overcome by Grafton's assurance that the good of the organization required it. Then, too, the fact that Bullen was a large depositor in the First National Bank doubtless had its weight.

James knew how the "accident" had happened. For Haynes, after helping James to his home, had learned the facts from Grafton, and had hurried back to James' room where the two spent a large part of the night in conference. So, when the two unhappy conspirators came hurrying in to make atonement for their wellnigh fatal blunder, their visit was not unexpected.

James sat back in his armchair looking into space, a cigar between his teeth, ignoring the presence of his agitated visitors. Bullen's remorse was abject. Throwing himself on his

knees at Clifford's feet, he blubbered like a baby.

"I didn't mean to, Cliff, 'fore God I didn't. I'd go and lay down under the fast freight for you, Cliff, any day. I aimed the slam at the preacher for fighting you, and then in the dark you walked under and took it. O, O, O, I'd rather have took it myself!"

Clifford puffed away in motionless silence. Grafton was too pompous to demean himself by kneeling as Bullen had done, but in his own way he was just as deeply moved. With tears in his eyes, he walked up and said:

"Why, Cliff, we wouldn't a hurt you—"

He brought his big hand down with affectionate force on Clifford's shoulder—the left shoulder. A sudden howl of pain from the boss scared the well meaning blunderers into spasms. James leaped to his feet and the language used by the man who was noted for his self-control and well-measured speech would not look well in print.

"You blankety blank blunderers," continued Clifford, after his language had become comparatively mild, as he paced the floor and gently rubbed the injured shoulder, "so you're not satisfied with your job last night and you've come back to finish me today!"

"O, no, no, no!" cried the two wretched men, who were wringing their hands in despair.

"Shut up," said Clifford savagely. "I've a damn good mind to send you both over the road for assault with intent to kill."

"O, Cliff," cried Mike in mortal fear, "we were just tryin' to help you in your fight."

"You blundering bull head, who asked you for help? How dared you butt your thick skull into my affairs?"

"Bill framed it up," said Mike, eager to shift the blame and "get from under."

Clifford turned his attention to Grafton in a way that made that worthy quake with fear.

"Didn't you have any more sense than to tell that booze fighting fat head to stick his coarse paw into the smooth game we are playing? He has balled up the whole business and played into the hands of the enemy."

"Thank God, Cliff, that his aim was bad in the dark. But aside from your bumps, which time will heal, no harm has been done." The Honorable Bill was so frightened by past events that he had not looked ahead.

"Why, you big puttypate, you haven't any more wit than Mike. Everybody knows that Mike had no reason to bat me and every reason to lay out Jennings. The whole town will know that it was a simple case of mistaken identity. The Anti-Saloon crowd will raise a big holler and get votes enough to win this election twice over."

Clifford's fat-witted aids were appalled at this probable consequence of their ill starred efforts.

"I'll swear that you wasn't wise to the game," said Mike in desperate eagerness to clear his superior.

"The fact that I walked into the trap shows that I wasn't wise," replied Clifford.

"We'll have to frame up some reason why Mike should want to slug you, Cliff," said Grafton.

"That's the first bit of horse sense you have shown," was Clifford's complimentary answer.

"There ain't no reason in all hell could make me slug you, Cliff," said Mike with unquestionable sincerity.

"I have it," said Clifford quietly. "We'll tell the reporters that I ordered Mayor Jones to revoke Mike's license because there had been too many complaints about his selling to minors and drunkards."

"But, Cliff," broke in Mike, "I wouldn't use a bat on you for that."

"No, I know you wouldn't, Mike," with the first approach to kindness in his tone, "but you must say that you did. That will give me a stand-in with the reform gang and perhaps save a few votes. I'll have Jones revoke your license and say that that was what put you

on the war path. After election you can take out another license in the name of your bartender, McCoy."

"But you won't let me go to jail, will you, Cliff?" Mike's fear was pathetic.

"O, I'll have the state's attorney see that the case is nolle prossed," said Clifford reassuringly.

"That'll make a hit with the church crowd," put in Grafton. "They'll call it forgiving your enemy."

That all kinds of callers came to the law offices of Clifford James, Attorney at Law, on all sorts of errands, was seen at this moment when the door opened and Goldie Arlington entered. Goldie was stunning. Purple and black were her colors this morning, and although purple and black, or at least lavender and black, are considered as the modest colors for old ladies, Goldie combined them in a costume the effect of which was dashing. The trim tailor made gown of fine black woolen goods, which shaped itself like a glove to her rotund figure, had a yoke of purple silk covered with black lace. Her black jacket was lined and faced with purple silk which peeped out at lapels, cuffs and back flaps. Her large black hat was surmounted by a great purple plume. Her black gloves were stitched upon the back with purple silk. The dainty patent leather

Oxfords were laced and tied with purple ribbons. And whenever she switched her skirts, which she did with careless freedom when crossing the streets, going up stairs, or throwing herself into an easy chair, she displayed a purple silk petticoat and silk stockings of the same rich hue. A traveling man who had recognized "Goldie" had told Clifford that her father was an honest laborer in a small Ohio town, that his name was Pat Buttles, and that when "Goldie" was earning a modest but honest living as waitress in a hotel she was known as Peggy Buttles. But nature had endowed Peggy with the fatal gift of beauty. She early acquired a taste for "easy money," as she styled it, and when she came to Princeville she was "Goldie Arlington." The traveling man swore that when Goldie was Peggy her hair was a very plebeian brick red in color. But, thanks to peroxide, her fluffy hair was now a pale yellow. Hence the name Goldie. The Arlington she got from a certain fashionable boulevard.

"Hello, Goldie," said Grafton and Bullen at once.

"Hello, Cliff," said Goldie, ignoring the others, "Are you busy this morning?"

"Not if you want to see me," said Clifford gallantly. He waved his hand to the two disgraced henchmen, and they, fearful of his further displeasure, retreated precipitately.

"Now, Goldie, what can I do for you?" said Clifford when they were alone together.

"O, Cliff, they're trying to put me out of business," said Goldie leaning back in the big office chair, crossing her knees, and kicking out a pretty little foot petulantly.

"What's the matter? Have you been getting noisy again?" asked Clifford a little sternly.

"Not a bit of it. But young Si Henstraw and some of the boys have been calling rather frequently of late. Old Si began to suspect him and followed him to my house. He raised an awful holler and wants my house pulled. He has been to Mayor Jones and Chief Lockhart and they said I had better see you."

An idea flashed over James. In spite of his customary reserve he leaned quickly forward in his chair his face aglow with eagerness.

"I'll take care of you all right, Goldie, but I want you to pull off a little job for me."

"Lead me to it."

"It'll take some nerve. I want you to compromise Dr. Jennings."

"Dr. Jennings," exclaimed Goldie in unfeigned astonishment. "What chance will I have with that ice berg?"

"Nothing easier," said Clifford in his old tone of easy confidence. "Call at his study tomorrow morning at five minutes before ten.

Tell him some tale of woe. Get as near him as you can. I will have some women call upon him at ten. When you hear them coming throw yourself into his lap and grab him around the neck. That's all you'll have to do. The women will do the rest," concluded Clifford grimly.

"O Glory! I should think that would take nerve! I would sooner tackle a polar bear."

"He is my enemy, Goldie, and I've got to get rid of him. We have fooled with him long enough and now I intend to play it safe. You can queer him with a touch."

"But he looks so terrible stern that I'm afraid of him."

"Looks never hurt anyone, Goldie, and he won't bite. You just mix with him when the others are coming in and I'll see that the police don't give you any trouble."

"All right, I'll go against him. But don't be surprised if I drop dead with heart failure," said Goldie, covering her real shrinking from the business by a kind of mock dismay.

That evening Clifford called on Kate. The handsome young politician was a frequent guest in the fine hill-top home of his chief lieutenant, and when the maid opened the door she made bold to say that Mr. Haynes was not at home.

"All right," said Clifford, to whom this bit

of information did not happen to be news. "I want to see Miss Haynes."

Hanging up his coat and hat with the air of one who is perfectly at home he sauntered into the drawing room and lolled back comfortably in an immense leather covered rocker. He waited a few moments—about as many as a young lady usually requires to touch up her hair and make effective use of her powder chamois—when a light step tripped noiselessly down the thickly carpeted stairs and Kate entered.

"Good evening, Kate," said Clifford rising and shaking hands cordially.

"O, how do you do, Mr. James?" said Kate, all in a flutter. She longed to call him Clifford but didn't quite have the courage. "I'm so happy to see you safe and sound. It's a wonder that that horrible bully didn't kill you."

"My enemies have always said I have a thick skull and now they can prove it," said Clifford lightly.

"But you were badly hurt, Papa says."

"O! I have a lump on my head big enough to be my bump of depravity, and when I move my left arm my shoulder feels like a nest of hornets playing rough house." Clifford moved his left arm gently and caressed the shoulder with his right hand.

"How fortunate it was that Dr. Jennings

came up just then! Everybody says that he saved your life."

Clifford's face grew black.

"See here, Kate, I am not only going to show that I trust you but that I believe that a woman can keep a secret."

At his fierce frown and intense manner Kate's eyes grew big.

"Bullen wasn't gunning for me but for Jennings. When he discovered his mistake he was so scared that Jennings had no trouble in knocking him out. I took the blow that was intended for Jennings, and then he walks up, makes a grand stand play, and poses as a life saver." To have his enemy praised as his deliverer was like having his arteries filled with acid.

"Why don't you tell people that it was a mistake so that they will know that you were not saved by him but that he escaped by your misfortune?"

"If it were known that a saloonkeeper had tried to club the minister it would make enough votes for Haskins and the reform crowd to snow us all under. Bullen was a fool and acted without authority, but now we must keep quiet and take the consequences."

"I'm afraid it's going to help the reform crowd anyway," said Kate. "At the meeting of the Woman's Club this afternoon everybody

was singing the minister's praises and making him out a great hero."

What Kate said enraged Clifford the more. The note of spite in her voice emboldened him to proceed.

"Kate," said he, leaning forward in his chair and talking in a low, intense voice, "we've got to discredit him or he'll have us all beat. Your father's position, mine, Grafton's, and the fate of the party itself in this district all depend on his defeat. He is more than the backbone of the opposition. He is the brains and the life-blood, too. If we can dispose of him the rest will be easy. I have a plan which will wipe his name off the slate in a hurry, and I want your help."

"My help!" said the girl in utter astonishment, "What can I do?"

"Can you trump up some errand which will take you and Mrs. Major and Marjorie to the minister's study tomorrow morning at ten?"

"Wh-why, perhaps. Marjorie and I were talking about asking him to find an assistant for our Primary Department in the Sunday school, as it is getting too large for us."

"That's it," broke in Clifford eagerly. "Go to see him tomorrow at ten. Be on time to the minute, and be sure to take Mrs. Major with you."

"All right," said Kate quite bewildered, "but

"KATE," SAID HE, LEANING FORWARD IN HIS CHAIR AND TALKING HAVE US BEAT."

IN A LOW, INTENSE VOICE, "WE'VE GOT TO DISCREDIT HIM OR HE'LL
—See page 82.

how is our calling going to discredit him?"

"If you time your call just right and enter quickly you will see something which will give a black eye to the parson's reputation for saintliness."

"Yes, but wh-what?" she asked hesitating.

"Never mind about that now, my dear." Clifford was warming up. "You just play your hand without losing your nerve and we'll soon have him cinched."

Clifford went home with the exultant feeling of one who scents victory just ahead. Kate retired with the unquiet feeling of one who is playing a new and a doubtful game, but who is determined to choke all scruples and win at any cost.

CHAPTER EIGHT.

The Trap Sprung.

HIRAM JENNINGS was opening his morning's mail and dictating answers to his young stenographer, Harry Clark. There were letters from charitable organizations appealing for help, an invitation to lecture before a small country church for the benefit of the Ladies' Aid Society, a dozen or more letters from the township chairmen of the Anti-Saloon League, and, best of all, one from his mother in the old Massachusetts home. He was just finishing the dictating when a rap was heard at the study door.

"Come in," said the minister in his brisk, business-like manner.

The door opened and in stepped Goldie. Her garb was irreproachably modest, being entirely of black. But even this simple color scheme, suggestive of morning, set off her blonde hair to advantage and made out an effective contrast to her fair complexion.

Dr. Jennings arose as she entered and the young man looked up from his typewriter. Goldie was evidently taken aback at seeing the stenographer. She was quick-witted and resourceful, however, and advanced boldly to a

more difficult task than she had at first anticipated.

"This is Dr. Jennings, I believe?" she began with her most gracious smile.

"It is, Madam," replied the minister in a tone at once polite and reserved.

"My name is Miss Arlington, and I've called to see you in regard to uniting with the church."

"O, indeed," said the minister in a more cordial tone. "Have a chair, Miss Arlington."

Goldie sat down. Does it seem strange that Dr. Jennings did not at once recognize this adventuress whom every other up-to-date man-about-town in Princeville knew by sight and by reputation? If so, the reason lies in this fact, that the minister is always the last person in the community to hear of any evil. Sin hides itself at the approach of the man of God. Let him join a group of men on the street and profanity is stopped, the unclean jest remains half told, quids of tobacco are spewed into the gutter, and cigar stubs are thrown away. When he enters a social group that is ripping a neighbor's reputation to shreds the subject is changed suddenly to the new orphanage or the great improvement in the music of the choir. Had Dr. Jennings a wife he doubtless would have been better informed. For women, by a kind of instinct of self protection, are very quick to

detect those of their own sex who break down the regular and sacred relation between the sexes. And this information they flash along from one to another in, as it were, a Free Masonry of their common womanhood. Besides all this, Dr. Jennings was one of the most unworldly and least suspicious of men whose heart was full of the Gospel that thinketh no evil.

"My membership at present is in the La Salle Avenue Congregational Church of Chicago, of which Dr. Brainerd is pastor," said Goldie with bland assurance. She had picked the names of church and pastor out of a newspaper. "But I very carelessly left my church letter at home. Can't you have your secretary run over and get it for me?"

"Why certainly," said Dr. Jennings.

"Here is my card with the address, 832 Colonial Avenue. Just ask the maid for the letter which I left lying on the center table in the parlor, said Goldie, handing the card to the young man. The stenographer had been in town only a week and was as innocent of the caller's identity as was his employer.

When the youth was gone Goldie resumed the conversation.

"Are you acquainted with Dr. Brainerd, Dr. Jennings?"

"O, yes! I know him very well. We regard

him as one of the leading men in the denomination."

"O! we all adore him in Chicago," said Goldie with great enthusiasm, "he's so big and imposing."

"Well, intellectually, perhaps," said the minister slowly, "but, of course, physically he is like Zacchaeus, who was little of stature."

"O, of course I meant intellectually," said Goldie, catching the clew and correcting herself, "for he is so short that he can hardly see over the pulpit."

"Why, he never uses a manuscript, and I understood that he had removed the desk from his pulpit entirely," said the minister looking puzzled.

"O, he never uses the desk himself," said the ever ready Goldie saving herself again, "but one day he had a visiting clergyman in the pulpit with him who needed the desk and it was positively ludicrous to see Dr. Brainerd trying to see over the top of it." The recollection was so irresistible that Goldie burts into a rippling laugh.

"Well, I would not have said he was as short as that, said Dr. Jennings, again looking puzzled.

"O, but he is though," said Goldie with sublime assurance, "You don't know him as well as I do."

"Perhaps not," said Dr. Jennings quietly, "but we were classmates in the Theological Seminary."

The big clock in the steeple tolled ten. Goldie's straining ears heard footsteps on the stairs. They were right on time.

"O, by the way, Doctor," said Goldie, opening her little morocco hand bag, "I have here a note of introduction from Dr. Brainerd. I should have presented it before." Rising quickly she stepped over to where he was sitting, fumbling the while in the little black bag. The steps were at the door. Crying out, as if in despair, "O, I've lost it," she leaped into his lap and clasped him tightly around the neck, at the same time skillfully throwing her long black veil over his shoulders. At the same moment the door was opened by Kate's ready hand and Mrs. Major and the two girls stepped in.

For the fraction of a second there was a tableau of tragic significance. Then the minister leaped to his feet, broke the girl's hold by sheer force and hurled her from him, crying, "Off, woman!"

The violence of the push sent her back against the wall half way between the innocent victim and the three horrified spectators. With bosom heaving with a good imitation of one subjected to unjust severity, she said:

"Well, you needn't be so rough about it. I got away as quick as I could when I saw them."

"Villainous daughter of Rahab," said Jennings, white with impotent wrath and mortification, "how dare you throw yourself upon one who would not wipe his feet upon you? Who set you on to blast a good name with your blighting touch? Out of my sight lest I forget the respect due, not to you but to your sex, and throw you from the window, as they did Jezebel of old, that dogs may eat your flesh. Begone, I say."

Goldie needed no second invitation. Even her brazen effrontery was terrified at the minister's towering passion. She glided swiftly from the room like a guilty shadow, the women drawing back their skirts as she passed as if in fear of contamination.

The three spectators had stood in speechless amazement. Marjorie had turned deadly pale and had scarcely drawn breath since the door had been opened. Kate had flushed to a flaming red, a guilty flush it was. Mrs. Major, with both hands upraised, was a perfect picture of the virtuous dowager scandalized beyond expression.

It was the minister who spoke first.

"I trust, Madam," said he addressing himself to Mrs. Major, "that it is obvious to you

that I am the victim of an unscrupulous and a designing woman?"

"It is perfectly obvious, sir, that you have been guilty of conduct that is both shameful and scandalous," said Mrs. Major in her iciest tones. "Come, girls, let us be going. It is too bad that we intruded at so interesting a moment." The sarcasm of the last remark cut like a rip saw.

"But, my dear Mrs. Major," broke in the minister in desperation, "listen to me a moment. This is a conspiracy to ruin me. I never saw this woman before. She was put up to it. She waited until she heard you at the door and then sprang into my lap."

"A likely story, indeed," said the matron contemptuously, "The hussy deserves no sympathy, but we would have thought more of you if you had taken your share of the blame, like a man, and not have tried so roughly to throw all the blame on her."

"But I am blameless. I was attacked. She pretended that she wanted to join the church. How could I know that she came only to make trouble?"

"The next time you call upon her perhaps you had better return that veil which is draped so gracefully over your shoulders," said Mrs. Major coldly, waving the two girls through the door and following them out.

The black veil which Goldie had thrown skillfully around his neck had escaped his notice in the excitement. Now he tore the unoffending gauze away, threw it on the floor, stamped upon it, then sank into his chair, put his head upon his desk, and sobbed great, hot, bitter, helpless tears.

CHAPTER NINE.

The Foundations Removed.

NOTHING that had ever happened in Princeville or in that part of the state had shocked and appalled the entire population like the disgrace of Dr. Jennings. Men turned pale with horror. Women burst into tears at the downfall of him whom they had idolized almost as a saint. It was the sole topic of conversation in parlors, over back fences, on the street, in the market places, and wherever two or three persons chanced to meet. The heartbreaking part of it all was that there seemed to be no doubt whatever as to the minister's guilt. The evidence was absolutely damning and its source was unimpeachable. All faith in human nature seemed to be shattered. The general opinion, freely expressed, was that if Dr. Jennings could not be trusted then nobody could be trusted. Could there be any reality in religion when its chief representative was thus proved to be a hypocrite? Could there be any sanctity in its ceremonies when the hands which had been lifted in benediction had embraced a harlot? Could there be any honor in the heart of man when he who preached purity with shining face and

impassioned eloquence was inwardly corrupt? People were asking blankly, Who can be trusted? All faith in each other seemed undermined. It was as if the very foundations of society had been removed.

The morning after the upheaval the Chicago dailies had proclaimed Princeville's shame with headlines that were black and bold. One of them ran as follows:

POPULAR PASTOR FALLS.

Princeville Paralyzed.

Well Known Divine in Woman Scrape.

Then followed a detailed account of the compromising position in which the Rev. Dr. Hiram Jennings had been discovered, the unquestioned integrity of the witnesses, the great reputation of the minister for eloquence, purity and zeal in temperance reform, and the gloom and horror into which church and community were plunged. A double column picture appeared on the front page bearing the title,

> Rev. Hiram Jennings, D. D., pastor of the Princeville Congregational Church, preacher, lecturer, reformer, who is accused of preaching purity and practicing free love.

All of the great dailies had the shameful story emblazoned with similar headlines and each had a picture showing Dr. Jennings' re-

fined and scholarly face. These papers went into practically every home in Princeville. After the first shock of shame and dismay at seeing the picture of the man, whom they had revered and honored for years, in the rogues' gallery of the public press, much surprise was expressed at the "enterprise" of the great dailies in getting the details of the scandal, together with the pastor's picture, the morning after the explosion caused by Mrs. Major's "discovery." Even the other members of the organization did not know that Josh. Scribner, editor of the Courier, acting under a hint from Clifford, had wired the news to the papers and had sent the photos almost before Mrs. Major had reached her own home.

There were at least two, however, who refused to believe the minister guilty. One was his loyal champion, Sam Blizzard, and the other was the hard-headed Silas Henstraw. Nothing short of a confession from Jennings himself could shake Sam's faith in his pastor. "Old Si" hated Goldie so cordially for luring his son from the straight path that he would believe her guilty of any scheme of blackmail or deviltry, and perhaps the contrary streak in his make-up led him to take the off side in this controversy as in most others.

A group of men were standing in front of the post office just after the distribution of the

morning mail, reading the newspapers and discussing excitedly the all-absorbing topic.

"I wouldn't believe it," said Dr. Dexter, "if his enemies made the charge. But Mrs. Major has always been one of his most loyal friends. And when she tells what she saw we've got to believe it."

"If anyone had asked me yesterday to name the very last man in this town who would go wrong I would have said Hiram Jennings," said Greenwood, the grocer, with an air of one whose faith in all goodness was gone.

"Well, we've all got to admire his nerve, anyway," said Jenkins, the gas man, "for playing the dual role of saint and sinner with such a bold front that he had us all fooled."

"If there was only room for reasonable doubt somewhere I would jump at it," said Judge Freeman sadly, "but it is a clear case."

"I ain't no judicial luminary, but it's far from a clear case to me," said Silas Henstraw with a touch of sarcasm. He had never liked the judge since that functionary had decided a line fence suit against him. "His young secretary says that he hadn't been out of the room ten minutes. That drab has gall enough to throw herself at a saint if it would suit her purpose."

This unexpected note of dissent from the

general opinion brought out a volley of answers.

"What purpose could she have?" said Jenkins. "The only thing she is likely to get out of it is to have her house pulled."

"How could she know that the ladies were going to happen in just then? You wouldn't insinuate that the ladies had laid a trap to ruin the minister, would you?" said Judge Freeman growing caustic in turn.

"The fact that they got busy so soon after they had chased out young Clark shows that it wasn't their first meeting," said Haynes who was standing in the door of the postoffice with cigar tilted high and who thus far had taken no part in the talk, but had been enjoying it hugely.

Just then Sam joined the group. Haynes continued.

"These bachelors are all alike. You can't trust any of them when a woman is within reach."

It happened that there were three bachelors in the group. Dr. Dexter was one of them. He replied:

"Perhaps you're thinking of your own bachelor days, Carter, but you'd better not put us all in the same class."

Mike Bullen was another of the bachelors. He only grinned with a knowing leer.

Sam was the third. Looking hard at Haynes in a way that reminded him of the church meeting, Sam said slowly:

"So far as your dirty sneer touches me I don't mind it any more than the yelp of any other cur. But if you refer to the smartest preacher and the best man that ever took his mail out of that post office I want to tell you that there ain't nothing been proved against him yet, and until there is I ain't a'goin' to stand for no slanders by any foul-mouthed politicians."

There was menace in Sam's voice and manner and he looked big enough to back it up.

"Humph!" said Haynes with affected indifference, "If you are going to fight all who believe the charges you'll have to take on every man in town."

"Not quite every man," said Henstraw, glad of such sturdy reinforcements, "I vote not guilty."

"Aw! he was caught with the goods, and that's all there is to it," said Haynes with the air of one who closes a discussion.

"I tell you it was a put up job," said Sam with rising wrath, "and I'm agoin' to find out who done it. And when I do I'll hang your hide on the fence."

Haynes suddenly remembered that he had

not balanced his books, and disappeared within the post office.

Clifford sat in his office, his heart full of exultation over the downfall of his rival. The stratagem had worked perfectly. Goldie had followed his instructions to the letter and had "got away with it" better than he had dared to hope. So far as the campaign was concerned, and, better yet, so far as Marjorie was concerned, the minister was now eliminated. The spotless cloth of his sacred calling had been soiled by the polluting touch of the scarlet woman. No amount of explaining could offset that fact and undo its damning work. The incident was practically closed. While he was musing on these pleasant thoughts the door burst open and in rushed Franklin Major and Ezra Crackington.

"Clifford, this is horrible, horrible!" exclaimed Major in great agitation. "Nothing but the word of my own wife and daughter could have made me believe it. When he who was believed to be best and purest falls it seems as though all manhood falls too. We are all disgraced. Religion, morality, and decency are all discredited. There is no longer any one who can be trusted. This means social anarchy and chaos."

"It's bad enough, the Lord knows," said Clifford reassuringly, "but not as bad as that.

Even though the best looking apple is rotten at the core we do not think the whole barrel full is spoiled. There have been false leaders in every age, but the world goes right on growing better. We will all breathe better after this storm has cleared the atmosphere." Clifford uttered these high sentiments with open-faced candor and guileless eye.

"Brother James is right," said Deacon Crackington. "Even David, the sweet singer of Israel, fell, but virtue did not die nor did all faith in man disappear. We have been grievously deceived and our confidence has received a shock which we will never forget, but we must not think that all goodness has disappeared from the hearts of men."

"But what an accomplished hypocrite he is," burst in Major. "It was only two weeks ago that he preached upon the text: 'Blessed are the pure in heart,' with such enthusiasm and intensity that his face seemed to shine like an angel's. It is a wonder that Almighty God did not strike him dead in the pulpit."

"Yes, as a hypocrite he is certainly a world beater," said Clifford without turning a hair.

"He can never stand in our pulpit again," said Deacon Crackington in righteous indignation. "It would be sacrilege for him again to stand behind the sacred desk."

"Yes," said Major, "that is what we came

to see you about. We have issued a hurry call for a meeting of the church for tonight to act upon the immediate dismissal of the pastor. We have served notice on Dr. Jennings of our purpose and informed him that he may be present to show cause why such action should not be taken if he so desires. I doubt if he will be brazen enough to attend. But, even if he is, nothing that he can say can alter the facts. We want to know if you will take charge of the case for us? Our action will doubtless be unanimous and probably also without debate. But the matter is so painful that we felt that, whatever statement of the case seemed necessary, had better be made by some fair-minded, disinterested party, like yourself."

Clifford bowed gravely. No, he didn't even smile!

"Of course Dr. Jennings may come and make one of his impassioned addresses and play upon the sympathies of the women present, and we want you to be prepared to make a kind, but judicial and perfectly fair statement of the facts, so that the real issue may not be obscured," said Deacon Crackington.

"Gentlemen," said Clifford slowly, "this is a painful service you require of me, but I feel that I owe it to the church and the community to take the case. I sincerely hope that the

matter may be settled without further unpleasantness."

"I had some scruples," said Deacon Crackington, as he and Major started for the door, "about asking him to resign merely on account of a money shortage, but now that we have found him to be a moral leper I say let him be cast into outer darkness." And Deacon Crackington's cane thumped on every one of the stairs as if he were driving the nails in his pastor's coffin.

A little later Carter Haynes came in. For once the self-contained party boss quite broke through his usual reserve. Jumping up and seizing Haynes by the hand with undisguised glee, he exclaimed:

"Carter, it's all over but throwing the cushions!"

Then he told about the church meeting for that night, and about his being retained as counsel for the church. But Haynes was not so jubilant. He told of Sam's promise to investigate and his menacing words, and he concluded by saying:

"This isn't any foregone conclusion as long as that man is at large. We must take care of him or he is liable to start something that will break up the meeting, as he did before."

Clifford's elation gave way immediately to

his usual caution. After a moment's silence he said:

"It's hard to see how he can uncover anything that will do his patron saint any good. But I guess you are right. We must play it safe. We'll have to tie him up somehow."

For another moment or two Clifford gazed at an ink spot on his desk blotter without seeing it. Haynes was silent also, not venturing to break in on the mental struggle which his superior was having with the problem. Suddenly, without a word to Haynes by way of conference or explanation, Clifford reached for his desk phone and called up the office of the Gas and Electric Light Co. This was what Haynes heard:

"Hello! Is that you, Jenk? . . . Say, just step over to the office for a minute, please. Right away . . . Good bye."

The clear, level tones of the boss were known to his friends so that he never had to tell them who was talking. Then he rang up Bullen's saloon. And this is all he said:

"Hello, Mike? . . I want to see you right away. Come right up. Good bye."

He had hardly rung off and leaned back in his chair when footsteps were heard. Both were coming. Jenkins had received word first but Mike's saloon was nearer, which offset the

handicap. As the four drew up around the big oak table, Clifford said:

"I want you fellows to help me beat the minister."

"The minister," exclaimed Bullen, rubbing his swollen jaw, "Not fer mine. I'd rather tackle a mad bull or a grizzly bear. Excuse me."

"O, we'll handle the minister this time ourselves," said Clifford, when the laugh at Mike's expense had subsided, "We want you to take care of his man Blizzard."

"I ain't taking on any more knock-out jobs of any kind," said Mike sullenly. "I'd sooner sell booze. It ain't quite so quick but it's a damn sight more sure, and there ain't no risk."

"We don't want anybody knocked out, Mike," said Clifford. "All we want is to keep Blizzard in a good safe place till after the meeting tonight is over."

"I can control his movements till six o'clock," said Jenkins, "but he quits work then. How do you expect to hold him after that?"

"That's what I called you in for," said Clifford. "Mike, at about 5:30 this afternoon you telephone Jenk. that the electric light in your basement beer vault is out of order. Then, Jenk., you tell Blizzard to hurry right over and put it in shape. As soon as he steps into the vault, Mike, slam the door on him, and keep

him there until we telephone you that the meeting is over. You can say that McCoy shut the door by mistake."

Haynes looked at Clifford with the unbound admiration with which mediocrity pays reverence to genius. Jenkins, who scrupled not to play a foul trick on a faithful employe in order to promote his own interests with the city authorities, or rather with the authority, simply said: "That's easy."

Mike, who was not noted for a tender heart or nice scruples, said, "How long are you going to keep him in that vault?"

"O, probably not more than two and a half or three hours," said Clifford lightly.

"If you keep him there that long," replied Bullen, "we'll have to start a bon fire to thaw him out. There's over a thousand pounds of ice in that vault."

"That's what we want. It will cool his enthusiasm and teach him not to use so much hot air."

And with guffaws over this witticism of the boss the group broke up.

CHAPTER TEN.

Clifford's Finish.

WHEN Franklin Major called the special meeting of the church to order that night it was evident that a desperate struggle was imminent. If any one had supposed that Hiram Jennings, having been "caught in the act," would plead guilty and get off as lightly as possible, they had only to take one look at the grim, gray, set face and blazing, indignant, defiant eyes of the minister as he waited, like a stag at bay, the onset of the human blood-hounds.

For the minister the issue of this trial was likely to be far more tragic than a trial for murder could ever be. An adverse verdict would blast his reputation, stain his fair name, cast him from the heights which he had been years in attaining, and ruin irrevocably his standing and prospects in his sacred calling. For in the ministry the blight of the scarlet letter is worse than the brand of Cain. Burning at the stake for his beliefs would be glorious and triumphant and a thousand times better than to be covered with filth and be compelled to live an object of loathing to all men.

In all the categories of human woe there

is no pang more bitter than to have friendship turn to hate through a mistake which cannot be explained. The iron went deep into Hiram Jennings' soul as he saw the members of his congregation look coldly upon him or turn away with averted glance. For seven years they had loved, honored and revered him. He had been a welcome guest in their homes times without number. He had baptized their children, married the young people, buried the dead, prayed with the sick, and comforted the troubled. The beautiful watch ticking in his pocket had been their gift on the fifth anniversary of his pastorate. His typewriter and mahogany study desk and chairs were also gifts from his people, in addition to numberless smaller tokens of their affection. Their love for him he had returned with all the warmth and fulness of a noble and generous nature. He would have died for his people before he would play them false. And now, as he saw them gathering, many of them being the purest and sweetest women and the most generous and high minded men that he had ever known, all turning from him with loathing for a crime of which he was innocent, his heart was ready to break. O, if he could only throw open the door of his heart and show them that the demon Lust had never broken in! O, if he could only throw his arms around the whole congregation

SHE SAT AT HER MOTHER'S SIDE WITH DOWNCAST EYES AND A HANDKERCHIEF CLENCHED IN ONE HAND IN HER LAP.

—See page 107.

and weep his heart out upon their bosom as he had done with his mother in his childhood troubles! Surely they would comfort him even as she had done in those far gone days.

But Marjorie! Surely she would believe in him. His lips had never avowed his love but his eyes had, and she was too true a daughter of Eve either to miss or to misunderstand the message flashed from eye to eye according to the universal code of love. If she believed him false then all else mattered little. But if she still believed in him he would defy his enemies to their teeth, and by the very power of outraged innocence compel them to acquit him of the foul charge.

Not much could be inferred from Marjorie's appearance. She was clothed in deepest black and was very pale. Her eyes were red. She sat at her mother's side with downcast eyes and a handkerchief clenched in one hand in her lap.

It was the first time in the history of the Princeville Congregational Church that a meeting had been opened without prayer. Under the circumstances they could not call upon the pastor to pray and nobody else was in the praying spirit. An imprecatory psalm would have been more in keeping with their mood.

Clearing his throat, while a death-like stillness fell upon the congregation, Franklin Ma-

jor said that the buisness upon which they were assembled was so embarrassing and so distressing to them all that they had engaged Mr. Clifford James to represent them. Would Mr. James kindly present the matter to the meeting?

Every eye was on the handsome young lawyer as he arose. Straight, clean-cut, cool, and with an air that was at once judicial and kindly, he began by saying, in low, smooth voice, that nobody could regret more than he the deplorable occurrence which was the cause of the meeting. However, he would remind them that, while to err is but human, to forgive is divine, and he would urge them to pass upon the business of the evening in a spirit of Christian charity. This veiled way of pronouncing him guilty under a plea for charity exasperated Hiram Jennings beyond measure. Clifford announced:

"This is a matter on which it is exceedingly painful for ladies to give testimony in public, and I entertain the hope that we may be able to adjust the trouble without subjecting our lady witnesses to that necessity. I would, therefore, ask Dr. Jennings, who, I understand, has been informed as to the object of this meeting, if he will simplify the situation by acknowledging the alleged fact that he was guilty of in-

discretion with a female in his study on yesterday morning?"

With white face and blazing eye the minister leaped to his feet and cried:

"Never!"

This was, of course, what Clifford expected. He was aiming, to use his phrase, to have the minister "get in bad" with the congregation at the start. With a deprecatory wave of his hand indicating regret and at the same time signifying that he himself still had the floor, Clifford continued as Hiram Jennings sank back into his seat.

"Since the defendant shows no inclination to spare the witnesses it will be necessary to proceed to bring out the unpleasant facts by the usual method of testimony. I would like to call upon Mrs. Franklin Major to take the stand."

With mouth pursed uncompromisingly and head held high, the worthy matron arose. The following questions and answers were listened to with breathless interest.

"Will you state to the congregation where you were yesterday morning at or about ten o'clock?"

"I was in Dr. Jennings' study."

"Whom did you see there?"

"I saw Dr. Jennings and a woman."

"Where was Dr. Jennings sitting?"

"At his desk."

"Where was the woman sitting?"

"In Dr. Jennings' lap."

This caused a sensation in the audience. The minister sat motionless as though listening to his death sentence. The examination continued.

"Did you notice any marks of affection between them?" James was now asking leading questions of his own witnesses, but there was no opposing attorney to object and no judge to rule such questions out of order.

Mrs. Major answered, "She had her arms around his neck."

"Did you notice any disarrangement of clothing?"

"I did."

"Will you state the nature of it?"

"Her veil was twined around his neck and remained there after she had gone."

"Of course they broke apart as quickly as possible after you entered?"

"They did."

"He doubtless was generous enough to assume the blame for the incident to shield the lady?"

"He was not. On the contrary he laid all the blame on her."

"Was the lady such a person as you would receive into your home?"

"Most decidedly NOT."

"That will do. Will Miss Haynes please take the stand?"

Kate arose. She, too, was deathly pale. Clifford's keen eye could see that she was horrified at what she had done but had no choice now except to play the game through. She was, however, so near a collapse that Clifford saw he would have to be easy on her.

"Were you with Mrs. Major yesterday when she called at the study of the Rev. Dr. Jennings?"

"I was." The answer was faint.

"Do you corroborate the testimony which she has just given?"

"I do."

"At all points?"

"At all points."

"That will do."

Kate sank back into her chair and seemed almost ready to swoon.

"Will Miss Major please take the stand?"

Straight, motionless and pale, with eyes looking straight ahead but seeing nothing, Marjorie looked like a marble statue draped in mourning. The questions and answers continued.

"Were you also with your mother, Mrs. Major, when she called at the pastor's study yesterday morning?"

"I was."

"Do you corroborate your mother's testimony?"

"Y-yes."

"At all points?"

"I—I, O Dear! I don't know what to think." And Marjorie put her handkerchief to her eyes and sobbed aloud. The example was contagious. Women were weeping all over the house and some of the men blew their noses harder than usual.

With firmness that amounted to sternness Clifford said:

" We did not ask you what you think about it. This is not a question of opinion but of fact. What we want to know is, Did you see the scene described by your mother?"

"Y-yes," was the faint answer.

"That will do," said Clifford, glad to have done with so uncertain a witness.

"Mr. Clark."

Clifford had no particular use for Clark as a witness, but he called him to give the impression that he was making a fair and judicial effort to ascertain all the facts. He also wished to have Clark's testimony presented in such form as to do the minister as little good as possible.

The young secretary arose.

"You are Dr. Jennings' secretary?"

"I am."

"Were you with him in his study yesterday morning?"

"I was."

"Who was this caller who has been mentioned in the evidence?"

"A young woman who gave her name as Miss Arlington."

A shudder went over the audience at this the first mention of the well known courtesan by name.

"Was that the first time that she had called?"

"Yes, sir," said Clark promptly.

"How do you know?" asked Clifford in a quick, challenging tone.

"Well, I never saw her before."

"How long have you been in Princeville?"

"One week."

Everybody knew that Clark had just entered Dr. Jennings' service.

"Then instead of saying that this is the first time she had called on Dr. Jennings you can only say that she had not called on him before this week during your office hours."

"Yes, but I don't believe—"

"Never mind what you believe or don't believe," broke in Clifford savagely. "Confine yourself to facts. And be more careful in answering questions hereafter than you were with

the last one. Of course Dr. Jennings and this Miss Arlington did not give any signs of recognition as long as you were present?"

This unprofessional way of leading a witness and of anticipating his answer also went unchallenged.

"They certainly did not," said Clark.

"Of course not," said Clifford significantly. "How did they get rid of you?"

"Miss Arlington asked me to go to her house for a letter."

"Miss Arlington!" Clifford's tone was sharp. "You were working for Dr. Jennings, I believe. Did Miss Arlington or Dr. Jennings send you on an errand?"

"Well, Dr. Jennings told me to go, but it was at Miss Arlington's request."

"Did you find the letter?"

"I did not."

"Why not?"

"The maid said there was no letter there."

"Obviously, then, they sent you off on a false scent just to be rid of you."

"It was her doing, sir, I'd stake my life—"

"Stop!" thundered Clifford. "Your opinion is not wanted. You may sit down."

Silas Henstraw was growing more and more restless. He kept pulling out his watch, moving about nervously in his seat, watching the door as if expecting some one, and giving

every evidence of impatience. But nobody noticed it.

"I would like to ask Dr. Jennings a question if he has no objection," said Clifford.

This startling request caused a stir. From the looks of Dr. Jennings' face, asking him a question would be likely to result like applying a match to a magazine. White with rage, the minister rose without a word and looked at the man who was trying to destroy him with a glance that would have cowed any but the cool and resourceful lawyer. Jennings' silence was due to the effort he was making to preserve his self-control. James was quick to construe it to the audience as guilty reluctance to testify.

"Of course," said he, in the tone of one who was willing to make any reasonable concession in the interest of fairness, "no man is ever obliged to incriminate himself, and Dr. Jennings is at perfect liberty to decline to answer any and all questions."

"Ask on," said Jennings with explosive force. "There is nothing that I will decline to answer."

"This incident of the veil," said Clifford, "to which the witnesses have given testimony. You admit, do you, that the veil was about your neck?"

"I do," said Jennings, blushing furiously.

"May I ask who put it there, you or the young woman?"

"The young woman," said Jennings with straightforward honesty.

"And was it placed there with or without your consent?"

"Without my consent." There was no uncertain sound in the minister's answer.

"What evidence have you to prove it?" There was insinuation in the lawyer's tone.

"My word, sir." There was grandeur in the minister's bearing, a consciousness of honesty and an unimpaired self-respect which thrilled and impressed the congregation.

"A mere plea of not guilty is not regarded as evidence in court," replied Clifford with coolness that amounted to a sneer.

Then the storm broke. The pent up indignation at the fiendish snare which his enemies were drawing more and more tightly around him, the sense of outraged innocence, together with the horrible fear of the living hell into which the all too probable adverse verdict would plunge him, filled him with fury. He was like a man fighting single handed against a pack of wolves. He first addressed himself to Clifford.

"Of course you don't credit my word,—at least you won't admit here that you do,—although you know in your heart that my word

has always been good and is now. Now you are trying to ruin me. Because I dared to fight one of your nominees, whom the brewers lead about with a ring in his nose, you have declared war on me." (At this Grafton, who occupied a rear seat with his wife, looked as though he was about to have a stroke of apoplexy.) "But it is not open and honorable war that you wage. With black-hearted treachery you make a show of friendliness and a pretense of fairness while you fight like an Indian from ambush or an adder in the grass. It was you with your organization behind you who tried to drive me out by bankrupting the treasury of the church. Failing in this you tried the fiendish trick of taking a dissolute woman whom you have protected in her shameful trade, and throwing her at me in the presence of witnesses. Do you ask, can I prove it? I don't have to prove it. There are some things which all sane men know without proof. I'm not so much surprised at you, for in the rotten game of politics to which you have given yourself,no trick is too devilish, no methods too vile, no chance too desperate for your cool and unscrupulous cunning.

"But I am surprised and cut to the heart that you, my people, who have known me all these years, before whom my life has been an open book, could have so little faith in me as to seem to be deceived, even for a moment. bv such

a transparent trick. But the motive and the method are obvious. In my temperance campaign I have incurred the hostility of the party organization. Failing in one effort to drive me out, they send one of their soiled doves to undo me with her polluting touch. Had I been a little more worldly wise and known then what everybody now seems to know, I would have recognized the caller as an adventuress and would have protected myself by keeping my stenographer present. But I did not know the woman. I had a vague recollection of having seen her upon the streets, she told a most plausible story, and then threw herself upon me without warning when she heard voices at the door. This is the whole story, the straight truth, on my record as a Christian minister and a man. And yet this politician, who uses his power to protect saloons and houses of ill-fame would have you believe that I would barter my manhood, assassinate my conscience, dishonor my profession, disgrace my church, alienate my friends, blast my reputation, and break my mother's heart—all for the embrace of a harlot! Why talk of proof where in the nature of the case there can be no proof and where none should be needed? Is it in vain that you have read my heart all these years? Is there no longer such a thing as faith in man? Is all confidence in each other destroyed? I despise their

plot. I scorn their evidence. I disdain to return any other answer to their foul charge than my word. And may Almighty God smite me to the earth and sink my soul forever in the bottomless pit if there be any stain of sin with woman upon my heart!"

Grandeur and majesty and the boldness of clear-eyed honesty glorified the minister's countenance and bearing, and his appeal to God thrilled his hearers and held them breathless. A vote taken at this moment would have been unanimous in the pastor's favor. Clifford saw the danger and set himself, like a skillful pilot, to steer the craft clear of the rocks. All eyes were upon him as he rose and began in low, confident and reassuring tones.

"If this, Mr. Chairman, were a question of sentiment or opinion I assure you that it would be vain for me to try to hold my own for a moment against Dr. Jennings' vehement and impassioned eloquence. Or were it a question in which our sympathies might legitimately be consulted I assure you that I would gladly drop this case right here. For, in spite of the unkind and unjust things which Dr. Jennings has said and insinuated regarding me, I wish to say, Mr. Chairman, that I entertain for him only feelings of kindliness and sympathy.

"But this entire matter is a simple question of fact, to be determined dispassionately in the

clear white light of evidence. In all kindness and charity, then, but with perfect fairness and honesty, let us examine the evidence and see what is actually established.

"It has been shown by the testimony of three witnesses, and not denied by the defendant himself, that he was found in his study with a notorious woman seated in his lap. It has been shown that this woman's veil was entwined and draped about his shoulders, showing that it could not have been an instantaneous act against the clergyman's will, but that she must have been there at least for some minutes and that too with his full consent.

"It is quite impossible to strain our credulity to the point of believing that Dr. Jennings was entirely ignorant of the character of his caller, when she is known by sight and reputation probably to every other adult person in Princeville. His order, then, to his secretary to go in search of a letter which did not exist was obviously a deliberate trick to get rid of a troublesome third party.

"And why should it be deemed so utterly incredible that a man should be overcome by temptation in a moment of unguarded passion? There have been many Arthur Dimmesdales in the history of the church. Even King David, the sweet singer of Israel, who was called because of his high piety a man after God's own

heart, was tempted similarly and fell. Even Dr. Jennings' most ardent admirers would hardly place him above the inspired Psalmist."

The spell of the minister's personality was forgotten under the masterly argument of Clifford. As he saw the audience yielding to him, he grew more and more bold in his indictment.

"The fact that Dr. Jennings is not altogether free from a touch of the old Adam is seen in his willingness to lay all the blame on the woman. Surely he himself would agree that the strong ought to bear the burdens of the weak. It is no part of chivalry for a man to desert his companion in the moment of danger, much less to shoulder on to her the whole burden of guilt.

"A further evidence of the panic into which Dr. Jennings has been thrown by discovery is his charge that there has been a conspiracy. In his desperation he evidently forgot that there could be no conspiracy without the cooperation of the honored ladies who have given testimony and the unmentionable party who was involved in the intrigue."

"I never—" cried Jennings leaping to his feet.

"Out of order," said Major sharply. "Mr. James has the floor."

Inwardly gratified at the way in which this thrust went home and at the sensation which it

created, but outwardly unruffled, Clifford continued.

"Again, it is an axiom in law that there is no crime without a motive. In his ungallant attempt to make his partner in wrong-doing a scapegoat to bear all the guilt he fails to ascribe any reason why she should do such a thing. I called on His Honor, the Mayor, this afternoon, and expressed great indignation that such a disorderly house should exist and pointed out the reproach that it threw on the administration. He immediately sent the chief of police over to order the Arlington woman to leave town immediately. The chief informs me that she left for Chicago on the 6:32."

He did not add that the chief had handed her a fat roll of bills, with the assurance that she could return after the affair had blown over.

"To charge her, then, with entrapping him is to accuse her of a crime for which she could have no possible motive and which in reality has closed her house and made her a fugitive."

This was Clifford's trump card and the effect seemed to be decisive. The minister's most loyal friends were silenced. The great honest majority, which had been sorely perplexed by the conflicting evidence, were now convinced

against their will. His enemies were triumphant.

Seeing that the supreme moment had arrived Clifford added:

"In view of the fact, Mr. Chairman, that the case against Dr. Jennings has been established absolutely, that no defense worthy of a moment's consideration has been offered, and that not even has any plea of clemency been made, I move that the present pastorate be terminated."

"Second the motion," called out Haynes without either rising or addressing the chair.

Major rose promptly.

"You have heard the motion," said he, not caring to repeat it.

The cold sweat stood out on Hiram Jennings' brow. They were then going to put it through! Was the foul conspiracy about to succeed? Already he felt himself trembling and toppling on the brink of the abyss of black disgrace and ruin. There was no mistaking that ominous, hostile silence that held the congregation motionless.

Silas Henstraw alone seemed to be uncertain and undecided. His glances toward the door grew more frequent. He now kept his watch in his hand. When the motion was made he fingered the arm of his chair nervously,

moistened his lips with his tongue, and sat forward on the edge of his chair.

"All those in favor of the motion—" went on Major.

Silas leaped to his feet to address the chair when a familiar voice drawled from the rear of the room:

"Just a minute, Mr. Chairman. Ain't you forgettin' to call for remarks?"

The explosion of a bomb could not have startled the meeting more. With one impulse all turned and saw Sam standing just inside the noiseless swinging doors leading into the vestibule. His appearance was indeed startling. He wore his working overalls. His hands were black, his face was all spotted as though a horse had kicked mud all over him, his hair was disheveled, and he was panting for breath. Clifford started and turned deadly pale to find his Nemesis at his heels again. Quite losing his self-possession, he half rose and exclaimed: "How did you get here?"

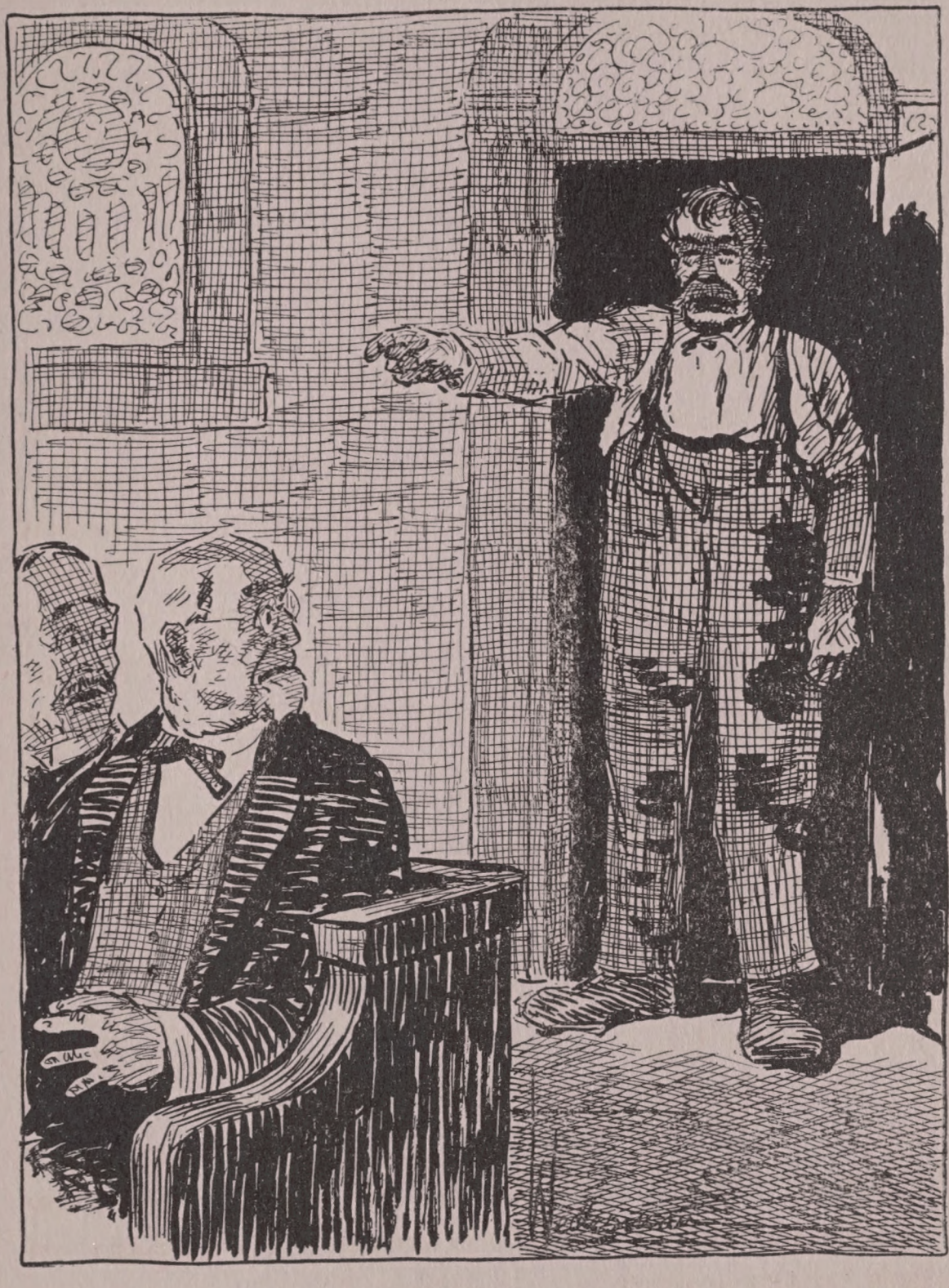
"O! I just blew in," said Blizzard coolly.

"Where have you been, Sam," asked Silas.

"In cold storage," said Sam with a shiver.

"It seems to me, Mr. Chairman," broke in Haynes, "that Mr. Blizzard does not show proper respect for this company to appear in such unpresentable condition."

"I ain't very well groomed, Mister Haynes,



"JUST A MINUTE, MR. CHAIRMAN. AIN'T YOU FORGETTIN' TO CALL FOR REMARKS?"—See page 124.

that's a fact," said Sam dryly, fixing his keen eyes on that individual, "but I reckon that those parties who had me locked in Mike Bullen's beer vault didn't intend I should be here at all. And it's like enough I wouldn't if I hadn't found one of the Company's dynamite ca'tridges in my pocket. When I blew the door open I got a jolt myself and the roar made me a little deef. So if you try to call me down, Mr. Chairman, the chances are I won't hear you," said Sam significantly.

A great light began to break on the congregation. Was it possible that there was after all a devilish plot back of all the trouble? A sullen muttering swept over the room. With the exception of half a dozen unscrupulous politicians, the congregation was made up of high-minded Christian men and women who wanted to do what was right but who had been grossly deceived. Even Deacon Crackington was weak rather than insincere, and like the others had been convinced of the minister's guilt. When, then, it began to appear that there actually was a conspiracy and that their beloved pastor was an innocent victim, the pendulum, which had been pulled far over by the false testimony, came back with a rush.

"I kind o' thought, Mr. Chairman," drawled Sam, "that before this 'ere case is closed we ort to get the testimony of the other

party most intimately concerned. And feeling sure that the honorable prosecuting attorney would not go to a disorderly house for any purpose, I decided to get the evidence myself." The sarcasm of that shaft went home, but was immediately forgotten in astonishment over Sam's recital.

"First, I asked Mr. Henstraw, who as you know is president of the Mutual Phone Company, to go to the central office and sit at the end of Miss Arlington's wire and listen with all his ears. Then I went to the Savings bank and drew out one hundred dollars. At two o'clock I called on Miss Arlington. Flashing the roll on her I said: 'Goldie, Boss Cliff is tickled to death over the neat way you pulled off that job on the preacher, and he told me to hand you this little century roll. He says that any girl who can put up a game like that and get away with it is a peach.'

"She took the roll and says: 'Well, this is sure easy money, but Cliff always takes care of his friends.' "

"You'll have to tell Cliff that I've made the delivery," said I, stepping to the phone, "or he may think that I've held out something for the rake off. What's his number? She knew all right, for she said right off, 'Main three double one.' I gave a ring and found Mr. Henstraw on the job. 'Main three double one,' said

I. After a minute I said, 'Hello! Is that you Mr. James? Here's a lady friend wants to speak to you.' "

The most nerve-straining breathlessness held the audience, while Clifford's white, set face showed that he knew he was listening to his doom, but was game to the last.

"I handed Goldie the receiver and now I would like to have Mr. Henstraw tell you what he heard her say."

Old Si, trembling with wrath, arose and said:

"The words I heard were these: 'Hello! Cliff, thanks awfully for the century. It was easy. I'll thank you some more next time you come down.' "

A sullen, menacing buzz, that increased almost to a roar, rose from the crowd. In an instant Sam's voice was heard and all listened.

"I don't know as its strictly constitootional nor exactly accordin' to Hoyle, but just the same I move you, Mr. Chairman, that we throw Mr. Clifford James into the street. All in favor of the motion manifest it by following me."

Like maddened bulls the men in the audience leaped to their feet and pressed after Sam's gaunt and sinewy figure as he started for Clifford, who now backed up against the wall by the speaker's chair. Quick as thought

a lithe, athletic figure dashed in between them, and, with uplifted hand, the minister cried out:

"Stop! Would you do violence in the house of God?"

Scowling black looks of vengeance, the mob paused while Major rapped for "Order," and Sam muttered that "it 'ud be a good Christian act to give him a coat of tar and feathers."

Like a hunted rat Clifford seized upon the moment's delay to slip quickly out of a side door near the speaker's platform.

"He's gone," "After him," "Don't let him get away," and similar cries broke from a hundred throats. Four or five men dashed through the side door while, with one accord, the congregation broke for the main entrance knowing that they could head him off in the street below. Led by Sam the men rushed headlong, the women, no less furious, following close behind. The mob spirit was in the air. Blood was boiling. The deepest wrath of the heart, which for a time had been perplexed and doubtful, was now fully resolved and was rushing straight to its mark. In an instant all had gone,—all but two.

The sudden and dramatic deliverance from a fate far worse than death quite unmanned Hiram Jennings. He sank into a chair with head in his hands and sobbed like a child. He thought he was alone.

"Can you ever forgive us?"

It was a voice that he had always loved, but now there was a tenderness in it that thrilled him to the heart. Dashing away the tears he sprang to his feet and gazed into Majorie's eyes, which fell.

"Forgive, Marjorie! You've done nothing for me to forgive. I shall always be grateful for your reluctance to testify about what you had been tricked into witnessing."

How sweet her name sounded as she now heard it for the first time in his voice!

"O! I knew all the time that you were innocent," said Marjorie gazing full at him with eyes aglow with trust and admiration and something else.

"How did you know?" he asked with a look which could not be mistaken. Again her eyes fell.

"Oh! I had confidence in you," she said simply.

"Can't you give me a better reason than that? Can't you say that it was love's intuition?"

He was holding out his arms to her.

"Yes," she cried. And he took her to his heart.

There had been an uproar in the street below, but they had no ears for it. It was subsiding now, but it made no difference to them.

Suddenly the noiseless doors swung inward and Sam stepped in.

"Caught again!" exclaimed he in great delight as they broke apart in confusion, "but this time it's the real thing."

Sam was rolling down his sleeves.

"You must excuse my interruptin' this 'ere devotional meetin' but I thought you'd be interested to hear about the hard-boiled finish of Mr. Clifford James."

"What have you done to him?" asked the minister in alarm.

"Wa'al, you see when we got outside the house of God I just simply couldn't hold 'em back," drawled Sam. "I guess every able bodied man got in at least one punch or a good swift kick until he looked like a bloody scare crow. Then somebody threw a rope around his neck and I guess he thought he was goin' to swing sure. But he didn't weaken even then. He's got as much nerve as the devil himself. Then I pointed to the railroad tracks and told him to beat it and never show up again in Princeville. He didn't say a word, but as soon as we took off the rope he disappeared hotfoot in the direction of Air Line Junction."

"But what will become of him?" asked Jennings, forgetting all his injuries at the thought of his enemy, ragged and battered, wandering homelessly in the night.

"O! Don't worry about him. He always lands on his feet like a cat. Grafton and Haynes formed themselves into a relief committee and followed him. He will catch the midnight express for Chicago at the Junction and by morning will be with his Goldie."

"Sam," said Jennings with great feeling, "you have saved me from a fate so horrible and delivered me to a destiny so heavenly," here he took Marjorie's hand, "that I couldn't repay you if I could bestow a mountain of gold and a lifetime of service. What can I do to show my gratitude?"

"Wa'al, there's just one thing that I can think of that would please me more'n anything else."

"What is it?" they both asked in a breath.

"To get a invite to your weddin' sometime in the sweet purty quick."

The minister looked at the maid and her eyes made answer. No man ever looked happier as he said:

"I guess we can accommodate you, Sam."

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
00021606303